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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF AN

INDEPENDENT MINISTER.

CHAPTERS

FROM THE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF AN

INDEPENDENT MINISTER.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,
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ERRATA.

Page 45, line 3—*for* "a hundred and fifty" *read* "£150 per annum."

„ „ „ 5 „ "a hundred" „ "£100."

„ 46[2] „ 11 „ "brides" „ "heiress brides."

„ 118 „ 19 and 20—*for* "intenser, and at last overwhelming, emotion," *read* "intenser and, at last, overwhelming emotion."

„ 126 „ 6 *for* "so" *read* "to."

„ 132 „ 9 „ "contented" „ "tempted."

„ 222 „ 29 „ "immediately" „ "practically."

„ 182 „ 6—*insert* comma after "resignation."

„ 71 „ 14—*dele* „ „ "denomination."

„ 77 „ 25 „ „ „ "nation."

„ 80 „ 9 „ „ „ "sanctioning."

„ 91 „ 3 „ „ „ "disbelieved."

„ 193 „ 8 „ „ „ "friends."

CHAPTERS

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CHAPTER I.

FIRST DAYS AT COLLEGE.

I SHALL never forget the day I rang the College bell. About an hour-and-a-half previously I had left London, and about half-an-hour ago had alighted from the train, which could not have travelled much slower if the dividend of the shareholders had been dependent thereon. "Is this the College?" I asked myself, as, standing with palpitating heart, I awaited an answer to my summons. I had dreamt of something symmetrical, scholastic, ecclesiastical, architectural; but I was at the door of a building which played all the antics possible to brick, stone, and mortar. I defy any one to describe it, either as to shape or style. I never studied its genealogical tree, and therefore it might have begun

either as a stable or a mansion; but I assumed that its palmiest days had arrived, and that it was never more honoured than at this time when I first stood at its door. The College chapel, which was now behind me, was in strict harmony. It pointed men to heaven with a spire which made them "lost in wonder," to say nothing of "love and praise." But in a few minutes I was in the presence of the President, who was a venerable, intellectual, thoroughly aristocratic, and gentlemanly looking man. No one could have received me more kindly. The cordiality of his reception made me at once feel at ease,—I was going to say made me feel at home, but that was impossible, for I could see that he was not. The noble brow, fringed with its few white hairs, bespeaking much causality, comparison, ideality, and human nature, bore the marks of much trial. There was sorrow in his face; his eyes were full of unwept tears. My first real College trouble was to be his.

But before proceeding further, let me introduce my readers to the other inmates of the house. My first impressions of men have generally been the last: my experiences of them having usually confirmed my intuitive perceptions; and so I pride myself on reading character, which I may as well state at once. It is of no use arguing the point, because my mind is made up, and my quiver is full of facts. Well, then, you will believe me when I say that the men were of the right sort. Of course, at College men keep coming, and

men keep going, but looking back at the bulk of those I met there, I can feel more than respect for them. If you get to know a man anywhere, it is at such a Dissenting College as that which I had now entered. We lived beneath the same roof; we partook of our meals at the same table; we stumbled across each other's path about every half-hour; we brought our preaching fees to the same "Box," around which in due time we all gathered for our share; we sat in council once a week for our own government; and we met for worship twice a day at the same altar. How was it possible, then, that we should fail to get to know each other's idiosyncracies, and obtain the key to each other's manhood? On entering, a new man was the great mystery. Before many weeks he was an ascertained fact. Speculation about him was at an end, and if there was aught he tried to hide, it proved a magnificent failure. Although it was the greatest and most sacred work for which we had all come to prepare, I only knew of one hypocrite, and of him I shall have to speak again. Selfishness belongs to all men, and when isolated from the generous influence of mothers and sisters, it must be expected; but I never found any lack of genuine kindliness. You had only to be ill to have five-and-twenty men servants; and there were few of the "fellows" who would not share the last remnant of wood if you were hard up for lighting your fire. Relentless sometimes were the criticisms of the sermon class, out of which more than one smitten

victim has retired to pack up his portmanteau and sail for America, where his genius would be better appreciated, but these were new men who had "to be taken down a few pegs," and when the needful discipline had been administered, the soothing draught was never wanting. Of course, we had our conceits, and never on any occasion did either Rooney or Tripples return to us on the Monday without astonishing us with the extraordinary acceptableness of their preaching on the previous day. If the deacons had not asked for the publication of the discourses, and offered to pay the expenses, the congregations at night were certain to be double those of the morning, and the people to have been breathless in their attention, not a few of them indeed leaning over their pews. It was somewhat strange that these men had a wonderful knack, when they preached in the College chapel, of making the atmosphere drowsy; but then, as they remarked, "they were not going to spoil their best sermons in that place!"

The housekeeper was a gem. Over fifty, she was one of the handsomest, and withal one of the kindliest women I have ever known. She had hair black enough, and teeth white enough, for many a girl of twenty to have coveted. Her face and form made her one of the queenliest of matrons, and helped in no small degree to give her the influence and authority of her position. I took for granted at first, what I afterwards heard, that we owed her presence in the College to a love-

disappointment some thirty years ago. She could not have laid herself out in its interests more thoroughly than she did. Very dearly she had to pay sometimes for the little kindnesses, the home comforts, and the enjoyable table with which she provided us. There were men upon the "Visiting Committee" who could look unutterable things, shake their heads gravely, and declare emphatically that the College funds would be bankrupt with such extravagancies. Mr. Peter Bowdler pronounced the joints which she ordered to be the most expensive the butcher could furnish. Why, he asked, did the sirloin of beef, and the leg of mutton, occur so often in the bill? Surely the neck could be used more frequently, and pork might be made a more constant dish. Then, as to the pastry. Why could it not be dispensed with two days in the week? upon one of which there might be cheese, and on the other broth! Mr. Bowdler was usually accompanied by a Mr. Brindley, a retired grocer, who found great fault with the quantity of condiments that were used. To salt he had no objection, but the mustard and pepper were in decided excess. But it was of no use. The spoon and fork were almost invariably laid, and it was a miracle if the knife was alone betokening cheese, or the spoon alone suggesting broth.

The first week passed, as most of the others were destined to glide away, by attending one class after another from nine till one o'clock, and shutting the study door about 5.30 p.m. upon all that did not per-

tain thereto. From one to two o'clock was recreation hour. But what is recreation? To one man it was arithmetic, to another, translating some little known Greek or Latin author, but to most of us it was cricket in the summer, and something after the fashion of chess in the winter. The afternoon was very brief, and was spent in letter-writing, newspaper reading, and by diligent men in such exercises as sermon composition. Sometimes your neighbour looked in upon you for a chat. Early in this week I had a call from the Doctor, to know if I was settling down. "Do you think you will stay with us, Mr. Wilkinson," he said. I replied that I desired to do so. "Well, sir," he said, "you have chosen a great work, and the few years you are here are few enough to prepare for it. I am glad to find, from your pastor's note, that you have been reading with him for the last year or two. We hear much just now that the great want is preachers, not scholars, but I hope you will never forget, Mr. Wilkinson, that you will never be a bad preacher for being a good scholar. Whatever you can get whilst here, do, and if along with it you get increased sympathy with your Master, you will be a workman not needing to be ashamed. I am passing away, but you may live to see the day, and I hope you will, when our Colleges will be able to have a larger staff of professors, and our students greater advantages. If our ministry is to keep pace with the times, the Churches will have to treble the incomes of the Colleges. It is easy to talk

of rough diamonds, but, in the first place, Sir, diamonds are not very common, and in the next, they don't spoil by being polished."

I thanked him, when almost immediately he proceeded, "In a commercial light, Mr. Wilkinson, your's is a bad speculation. You will have to carry all the anxiety of a business man, when business is most perplexing; you will need all the laboriousness of a hard-working labourer; all the skill of a general; all the diplomacy of a statesman; all the secresy of a lawyer; all the boldness of a soldier; all the gentleness of a woman; all the erudition of a learned man; and for the whole if you do well and are successful you will get five or six pounds a week; whilst, if you get an average salary, it will be two or three pounds per week, which is the Christian method of slowly killing ministers and escaping the penalty of murder. At present you are dazzled by a glorious vision, and it is a good and wise providence that allows it to be so. I tell you now what will be, that when you remember my words you may remember these of an old man who has fought the fight: 'Be thou faithful unto death;' 'Let no man take thy crown;' 'Endure hardness as a good soldier;' 'Be not weary in well doing;' 'Be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;' and if ever a voice whispers to forsake it for the kingdoms of this world and their glory, be your answer His, who before He became Lord of the vineyard, became Lord of the wilderness, 'Get thee behind me,

Satan.' But I am lecturing you, Mr. Wilkinson, and that was not the purpose for which I called. If you will come and have a cup of tea with me, say a week to-day, I promise that you shall not have a lecture."

It was grand to hear this old man talk, for often in his look as in his words there seemed inspiration. But when he conducted the family worship, which he always did in the morning, leaving the evening for the students to take it in turn, you felt that you were kneeling before God's throne with one of the old Patriarchs or Prophets. Never before or since have I felt to such a degree the power of another man's prayers. It was almost impossible to kneel down when that old man clasped his hands and opened his lips, and not feel that you were in the presence of the unseen God. How beautiful were his thoughts! How chaste his language! How contrite his confessions! How earnest his entreaties! How full of music his praise! If most of us had the gift which he had, there would be no mooted question as to the "Desirability of Liturgies." Our influence would be felt on the side of extemporaneous prayer, and the question before the Episcopalians would be, "The desirability of giving up the Liturgy." I admire the Liturgy. With slight alterations it would be almost matchless as a form of prayer. Its sorrowful wailings over man's apostasy, its persevering pleadings for the Divine mercy, its comprehensiveness, and its unflagging devotion, leave only one thing to be desired—the freshness and reality of a

living heart. I have heard it read by some of the greatest readers, and some of the devoutest men in the Establishment, and therefore often have I listened to it with awe. But when this old man prayed out of the fulness of his heart, I did more than listen—I prayed along with him. If he had not been in sympathy with all that is great and noble, he would have been the most consummate hypocrite, and one of the best actors the world has ever had. But beyond all doubt the man "Walked with God," and on these occasions paused to commune with Him as friend communes with friend. I know not that I could give a better description of his prayers than I find that quite unintentionally I have done. There was intense reality in them, and accordingly there was the utmost simplicity. Sometimes when he retired from the Hall I looked to see the glory that shone on the face of Moses. What was this man's gift in prayer? The Spirit of Christ, that, and neither more nor less. We might have it, therefore, and pray as he prayed. If we would lead the devotions of others we must have it, or the sooner we adopt a form of prayer the better. With the "Let us pray" of a Dissenting Chapel is usually commenced the most wearisome part of the service. The bulk of the people are sitting; it is the opportunity for the more curious to examine the congregation, to find out the new bonnets, admire the new dresses, to see who is absent and who present. The little folks wonder when the minister is going to give up preaching with his eyes shut, and are not these last

words a true description of very much which passes for prayer? Preparation for the exercise will end in more finished essays, but the heart must be the "Temple of the Holy Ghost" if He is to help our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered.

My first Sunday is very memorable. I had the opportunity of seeing the inside of the College Chapel, of inspecting the congregation, and of hearing the President and one of my fellow students preach. The building seated about 150 persons, but it was never full either morning or evening. By profaning the holy place with sundry whispers I ascertained that the Baker and his family were present; also the Shoemaker minus both wife and family, and the Draper and a pretty daughter at whom one of the men cast very soft and tender glances. Several pews I may at once remark were tenanted by a fair proportion of the sex, whose hearts fluttered with expectations, and excited no little fluttering in the gallery from which we looked down. The five Miss Butchers were especially conspicuous, the eldest of whom did not regard herself as by any means shelved, although tradition affirmed that she had been forsaken by at least half a dozen relentless Lotharios, and the youngest of whom was old enough to be eligible for gentlemen of various ages. They were silked, and satined, and mantled, and shawled, and bonneted, and hatted in the latest style. It might be chance that they were just in time to be at the door, as most of us, gowned and capped, passed out, softly

whispering upon the presence of clouds above and the absence of umbrellas below; but poor Jones saw no alternative but to ask them into his room till the expected shower had come and gone. How he got them into his room—considering that it was not a very big one to begin with—and that, among other things it contained his bed, boxes, books, coal scuttle, and chips, it is not very easy to say. Dalton was the preacher in the morning. He was a dark man who invariably played the accordion from 1.45 till 2 p.m., when the dinner bell rang; and was able to show you on your first introduction to his room—and I was soon destined to the honour—75 Sunday School Addresses, written out in writing which might have passed for copper-plate. My first confronting him face to face was in this wise: I had often heard something tripping along the corridor which might have passed for a female, and therefore excited my curiosity. I made up my mind that the next time I heard it I would suddenly open the door before it turned the corner. I did so, when Dalton's head came into collision with my own. But I must not forget that on the present occasion he was preaching upon the text, "She hath done what she could," and chiefly made it evident that his head had not recovered the concussion of the other day. How well I remember the following paragraph with which it closed, "And my dear brethren, if I have one wish above another, one ambition greater that another, one fervent desire outburning every other, it is, that when

I have finished my course, run my race, and fought my battle, it may be inscribed upon *my* tombstone, '*She* hath done what she could.'"

The Doctor preached at night, and if ever the Son of Man has been glorified in the presence of men since that hour when He was transfigured before the disciples, it was that night. The discourse was founded on the conversation of the Messiah with the woman of Samaria, and the points dwelt on were: His yearning desire to reclaim the fallen; His exquisitely delicate treatment of her guilty heart; and the gradualness of His revealing Himself to her. When the last hymn was given out, "All hail the power of Jesu's Name," I felt that I could sing it and adore that Name as I had never done. No description of Christ, throned, crowned, and sceptred in heaven, could have made Him so resplendent as He shone before me whilst sitting on that well, where He talked so matchlessly, and drew to His heart so imperceptibly the woman of Samaria. Nothing could have made me hard or harsh to the fallen or outcast at the close of that service, and I longed for the opportunity of seeking to save the lost. That sermon ought to be an influence for good to this day.

The next Sabbath was yet more remarkable in my history. I was placarded on the preaching list to officiate at Van Dieman's Land, a station about seven miles distant. The exact locality was pointed out to me by one of the men, who waved his hand toward the horizon,

after which very definite instruction, I started out on a frosty wintry night, and cannot say that I felt the discipline so beneficial as I have no doubt it has proved. My comfort was that I had a sermon with me which I did not for a moment doubt would be unequalled by any that would be preached in London that night. The mysterious Providence was not a little pondered over by me that I was to preach it at Van Dieman's Land, and not to one of the largest and most intelligent audiences that had ever assembled around the pulpit. It was the only discourse in my possession, but I had it in my memory as well as in my pocket, and there was a copy of it in the Committee-room, which I had furnished as a specimen of my capabilities, for the august body which there met to take such matters into consideration. It did not contain all my thoughts about the text, for the question forced itself on me again and again, "If I go on using thoughts in this way what shall I have for my next?" And hence, though this was my only sermon, I had materials in store to build with, and consequently felt myself no mediocre man. There was a tradition about the station to which I was going which I must own gave me a passing sensation of nervousness. It was this: Not long ago one of the men was accosted by the paymaster at the close of the service with this remark, "It is usual, Sir, for us to give five shillings, but I think I am expressing the feelings of my friends when I say that we have heard better sermons than yours,

and so I shall give you half-a-crown." If, however, I had a moment's fear that such humiliation might be in store for me, I at once dismissed it as preposterous. I concluded my meditation on the filthy lucre question by an assurance, which soon became doubly sure, that the very man who had so served my predecessor would remark to me that they were in the habit of giving five shillings, but that after such a powerful discourse they could not show their appreciation by offering less than ten shillings. When the service had concluded, and I had preached with an unction at which I myself was amazed, and no such result followed, I concluded that they were utterly unable to value such an effort. My reflections on returning home were again of the right man in the wrong place, but I dreamt of the day when my words would be hung upon by assembled thousands, and when I should be the talk of a crowd, compared with which the followers of Spurgeon would be insignificant, both in quantity and quality, and which, like the audiences of Chrysostom, would be unable to suppress their enthusiasm.

CHAPTER II.

CHANGES.

THIS was not the last occasion on which the sermon was given. I preached it at all our stations. At Cobwebs I was decidedly placed under difficulties, inasmuch as the pulpit had once been a toilette table, and since then had suffered considerably in its legs, two of which were now supported by bricks, and which, therefore, threatened to give way whenever I approached a passage upon which I depended for effect. At the Heath, it was at any rate soothing in its influence, for an old man, whom it at once translated into the region of visions and held under its spell until the pause before announcing the last hymn, most cordially thanked me for my "excellent discourse." At Woodleigh, a benevolent old lady who led the tunes, snuffed the candles, and kept the juveniles in order, and whose opinion therefore was much more than representative, after asking me how I enjoyed the singing and other arrangements, and finding that I had no bone of contention with her, gave me to understand that the sermon was only second to the singing, and hoped that I would go

again. At Nazewing, nothing was said to me, and nothing striking occurred, but, as I afterwards discovered, all the five authorities, who in turn took in the supplies for dinner and regarded themselves as in all respects qualified to criticise, pronounced it to be lamentably lacking. Nicholls declared that any poor drivelling Methodist might have preached an Armenian sermon like that; indeed, half of it would have done for a Unitarian pulpit. Coldtart said if I could not manage a text like that, he wondered what I should make of Romans ix. 21, 22, or John x. 28. Mr. Bottomly said that he always counted when a new man came to preach how often the words "justification," "election," "sanctification," and "Divine sovereignty," occurred, and he had never heard them less, for in this sermon he never heard them at all. Jabez Robinson said he could remember when they got sixteen ounces in the pound and strong meat, but that sermon was not even milk for babes. Sanderson thought that some consideration must be made for a young man, and wound up the council with a sigh.

But before these criticisms had been pronounced, we had an arrival which was destined to create as great a sensation in the quiet round of College life as usually happens in one man's curriculum. It was Mr. McEwen. He was far from handsome; his hair and whiskers were somewhere between red and yellow; his eyes were blue and seemed to look a great deal more at each other than anywhere else. He had a colourless face, with neither

a good nor noble feature in it. No man, however, could have been at greater ease among strangers, and the way in which his eyes looked at one another, when with a somewhat comic voice he drew upon an inexhaustible store of humour, gave him at once a standing as a "very jolly fellow." By luncheon-time the next morning, he was familiar enough with us all to take us into his confidence, which accordingly he did. "Well, old fellows," he began, with his back to the fire and a glass of beer on the chimney-piece, "I have just been telling my friend Johnson, whom I have had a walk with and find to be a capital chum, that my boxes have not turned up yet. Very sorry, because I gave that fellow at the 'Tavistock' (always stay at the 'Tavistock') strict orders to send them at once. Not only is my wardrobe rather scanty, but the stuff out of which wardrobes are made; for this considerate committee of yours has been kind enough to keep me waiting for weeks in London. No use writing to my old governor, for on the very day the cash is due he writes his cheque and never an hour before. Now then, old fellows, you know exactly your humble servant's whereabouts. Of course I might get along as best I could till I can bleed the banker, which I am grateful to say I shall be able to do before very long, but would waiting make you companions in tribulation? Would it be throwing myself on your generosity? Would it be acting as I would like to be acted by?" Anything more cool and self-possessed cannot be imagined, and it was greeted

with such heartiness as made him so sure of response as to leave the matter with self-evidently pleasant anticipations. This I do know, before many days had gone he had a better filled book-shelf than most of us, and by no means a disheartening wardrobe.

Perhaps the most favourable impression he made was at the weekly debating class, and perhaps an outline of the meeting is worth noting as a specimen of what our doings and sayings on these occasions were. The topic was on the "best method of introducing members to our churches." The discussion was opened by Thompson, who argued that the entire responsibility ought to be thrown upon the applicant. Requiring the candidate to give his experience was requiring, he contended, what many were unable to fulfil, for all cannot write, and all cannot speak what they feel, and if they could, it only creates a temptation to unreality. Then as to visitation. "Who," he asked, "that has passed through it, does not know either how meaningless or cruel it is?" For how utterly impossible it is, he went on to say, to take many men into the confidence of our inner life! Our highest experiences wear a veil which can only be uplifted by one with whom we are in thorough sympathy. We cannot talk flippantly or easily about the meeting of our soul with God and the hour of our first fellowship with Christ. If we have passed through the agonies of the new birth, immediately we confer not with flesh and blood, and if we have had moments when like Paul we have been caught

up to the third heavens, like Paul we carry about the secret for the better part of our lives untold. Some of us could as soon have parted with our hearts as with their first experience in the new life. Visitation does nothing so much as keep out of the church the men who are the fittest to be in it. He then went on to prove that it could not possibly have been a part of the earliest church life.

Dalton supported the essayist. He was visited, he said, by two old men who did not very much torture his sensitiveness by experimental questions, but they certainly put him through the "Assembly's Catechism." He could not remember whether they ever asked him how he knew he had been "born again," but they did ask him to give a definition of "adoption," and then to show wherein it differed from "regeneration." Moreover he was asked if he could state where "justification ended and sanctification began?" But he said he should never forget his feelings when asked "What the difference was between the Sub-lapsarians and Supra-lapsarians?"

Jones rose next and said, "So far as my experience goes, I have no very great fault to find with visitation. A middle aged member and a very old deacon were appointed to see me. The middle aged member began by saying how delighted he was that Mr. Jones was coming forward. He knew all the people would be delighted I was coming forward. He had often thought that I ought to be coming forward. Whenever he had

seen me at the prayer meeting, or more than commonly interested in chapel, especially during the "Appeal," he felt how nice it would be if I only made up my mind to throw in my lot with them. Old Torrens occupied the rest of the interview by giving me the history of my father's joining the church, which he told me he remembered very well, and then by giving a history of the chapel up to the present time."

After the question had been spoken to by several others, McEwen rose, and after thanking the gentleman for his excellent address, he hoped he would be forgiven for taking a different view. He felt, he said, a great jealousy for the purity and honour of the churches and hoped that this would be regarded as an apology for advocating the old and, to all appearance, the harsher view. He believed he was speaking for them, as well as for himself, when he said that it was truer success and greater honour to receive one thoroughly converted man into the church than a hundred about whom there was the slightest suspicion. He did not hesitate to say that taking away what were called the existing barriers from the doors of the church would be opening up free access to very doubtful personages. There was not so much of the poetical or of the sentimental about his view, but he had seen the working of both systems, and he was obliged to conclude that it was very much better to keep one or two men outside, rather than to admit hundreds of unqualified persons. He believed we were all seeking the same object, and he

was sorry, therefore, to take the view which did not appear to be that of the meeting, but he had strong convictions on the matter, and felt bound to declare them.

Thompson, in replying, said that he had not yet been very much struck with the extraordinary purity of the churches. Their inconsistencies were often patent enough, and it was absolutely painful to see the amount of envy, slander, malice, and uncharitableness, which was mixed up with church life. For his part, he would as soon see a man drunk or hear him utter an oath as relish calumny or back-biting, or be a party to meanness or trickery. He spoke strongly because he felt strongly, and he believed that the present system of receiving church members had not a little to do with these blots upon our church life. The present system was against a high-toned and spiritual life, because to a large extent it took away from the candidates a sense of personal responsibility. Their having been visited was a kind of certificate of character, and was, indeed, everything they required as long as they did not fall into any of the grosser sins; and, therefore, he would like to see what would be the result in our church life if the candidate bore the full burden of his personal accountability.

It must be confessed that McEwen made upon the whole a very favourable impression, and he continued to make ground with many. His popularity was greater outside the College than in. At the preaching

stations he was the favourite, and, to our amazement, he became asked for by many of the important churches in the county. This was attributed to a sermon he preached on "Mighty to save," which contained some very thrilling descriptions of a house on fire, and a wreck at sea. The hour of luncheon had become his favourite time for speech-making. Not many weeks after he had been with us, he made a communication which completely startled us. "Gentlemen," he said, "the Doctor has just shown me a letter of which you will no doubt very soon hear, for it calumniates and traduces my character, denounces my recommendations to the committee as forgery, and reflects on all that I hold sacred and dear to me. I need scarcely tell you a base motive is behind this. It may possibly affect my position here; perhaps I may have to retire, for I would never stay where I should be suspected; but it is due to justice and myself to unmask the motive. We have all had our love affairs. Unmanly is the man who has not some history unread by all but himself, stored away in some corner of his heart. I was fortunate enough to win the attachment of a lady upon whom one of our ministers had cast his own eye; it is this rival who seeks in this dastardly way to stab me. Perhaps some of you may think it strange that I do not accept the Doctor's challenge and have the matter investigated, but do you not all know what a committee is? If it comes to pleasing a popular minister who sends an annual collection to the College, or doing justice to a poor

beggar like myself, you know who will be heard and who will be turned adrift. If I leave you, I shall carry the memory of your kindness with me as long as this heart shall beat, and this promise shall be my support, 'He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noon-day.'"

We were all too much paralysed to speak, and taking advantage of the pause, Mr. McEwen added that he would take back his books to London in the morning, also several articles of furniture which he had obtained there. This made some few of us somewhat more suspicious than we had been, and for our suspicion there proved good grounds. The bookseller never had his books returned or the broker his furniture; several of the men never received back their loans; and we all felt that our honour was involved till we had paid off the various debts incurred by his brief stay.

In after years I was in one of the Midland counties, at the ordination of a fellow student, when accidentally the name of Mr. McEwen came up as "a devoted man of God," with large gifts and great talents, but who, in consequence of bad health, had taken a small charge in the neighbourhood, and who was about to be married to an heiress to whom he had given lessons in French and German. We took steps, I am happy to state, which left the lady a spinster, though I do not suppose she knows to this day whom she has to thank.

The next I heard of him was five or six years

after that, when he was the pastor of a large church in the North of England, where he was charged by his own people, first, with preaching other men's sermons; secondly, with so ill-treating his wife that she had to leave him; and thirdly, with having obtained her father's consent with a forged document as to the amount of his income. He is now in the Church of England. Let me say that neither Independency nor Episcopacy is any more invalidated by such men, than is a magnificent palace by an in-dwelling rat, or than the first Church was by the presence of a Judas.

I had just settled down in the College when the atmosphere became weighted with rumours about the old Doctor leaving. At first I was unable to give any credence to them, but it soon became too apparent that his resignation was a cruel necessity. The state of the College was the first formal cause of complaint, and of course it was made by the committee. It was alleged that there had been for some time a falling off in the number of applicants for admission. The Doctor very rightly, however, disowned that he was the cause of that, inasmuch as he was as diligent in his duty, and as qualified for his position as he had ever been. But no member of the committee could seriously believe that he was the cause, and indeed it must have forced itself upon each one that their own divided state was cause enough. The first charge was soon followed up by others, which not only accomplished the object, but were not long in digging the old man's grave. There

were reports, he was told, of extravagance at home, also of debt, and other things were vaguely hinted at. There was no denying slightly involved circumstances, but why? Not because of extravagance at home, but because an old man, proud of his name, had been unable to see the son that bore it, dishonour it. To free that son he had been willing to beggar himself, and for a time to embarrass himself. But only for a time. How hard he was working we knew, and most of the committee must have known. Many a book that bore not his name had recently been issued, the cost of which had been a perceptible shortening of his life. For newspapers and reviews he was working late at night and early in the morning. If the committee had helped him it would only have performed a Christian duty, but if it had been content to leave him he could have redeemed himself as he was doing every day. But the time was refused, and a pressure brought to bear upon him which made him helpless in their hands. And so this old man, who was too old to begin life again, and whose future was totally unprovided for, was driven from our midst with a breaking heart. My blood boils when I think of the wrong to which he was subjected, and yet there was not a single member of that committee that I could call a bad man. The truth is, men who are gentle alone, often become hard as stone in committee. If men of strong convictions, high principles, great integrity, and above all with a solemn sense of personal accountability are needed anywhere, it is on

committees, where it is so easy for a man to lose his individuality, and assume that all that is blameworthy is the deed of the corporate body. It will be a good thing for the Churches when her committees are composed of such men, and not as they often are of a few strong minded men who have elbowed themselves forward, and a few additional nonentities whose only claim to the position is a good subscription.

The first authentic account we heard of the good old man was of breaking health and growing infirmity; induced no doubt by what we further learnt, that he had settled in one of the London suburbs in the hope and expectation of securing metropolitan supplies, and, therefore, of obtaining a means of subsistence, but that he was left unnoticed, and even shunned, by those who ought to have acted towards him as brethren; and consequently we soon heard that he was in circumstances of deplorable distress, having had to part with almost the whole of his furniture and the greater part of his books. Apart from all this I should have called upon him, but it seemed to make the necessity greater. I knew, however, that it would never do to offer him sympathy or to make any allusion whatever to his leaving us, for he was much too sensitive and too proud to bear such a conversation. My heart melted and I almost abandoned even my purpose of calling, as soon as I saw the humble home in which this old man was to end his days, but, as I anticipated, if he felt oppressed by the great alteration in his position he did

not let it appear, and received me with as much stateliness and grace as though he had been the lordly owner of some proud mansion. The weakness and infirmity of his body, however, he could not hide and did not attempt to; and it seemed to me that the great mysterious change which makes a grave for the body, and eternal life or death for the soul, was very largely occupying his mind. Although the conversation on my part was of a very ordinary character, he soon found occasion to tell me of the death of a common friend, and thus proceeded, "I don't expect, Mr. Wilkinson, to be very long after him. Perhaps I am not too well prepared for an event so great and solemn, and sometimes know what doubt and fear are, but I am mercifully preserved from overshadowing doubt and tormenting fear. It is only now that the true nature of life with all its solemnities, obligations, and opportunities, seem to have dawned upon me. How gladly would I live it over again, and how much nobler and purer should it be! My regrets of the past are incessant. For one thing, I have been too much absorbed in literature and too little engaged in the work of the Master's vineyard. The besetting temptations of many of us, Sir, are authorship and scholarship. I felt them ensnaring me during my first pastorate, but I soothed my conscience by the thought that they were my recreation. That was so, but it would have been well if I had felt that the call of the Master was to rescue men from the horrible degradation and misery in which they were living very

near to my own door. If, instead of leaving such work for the town missionary, I had thrown myself into it as occasion allowed, I should not have preached worse sermons, but I should have been a much happier man to-day. I am often haunted with the sights I used to see in more than one town where my lot was cast to work for Christ. On the Sabbath I saw the well-dressed, respectable, and educated, but there were streets down which I could not walk on the week-day without seeing men and women, too loathsome and disgusting to look upon, and children far worse off than the fatherless, motherless, and homeless: but to the former I preached, whilst I left the latter in the perdition to which sin had brought them. How it distresses me! We all pass through our Lord's temptation in the wilderness; the kingdoms of this world and all their glory may be ours, or we must deny ourselves, be baptised with suffering, bear reproach, and carry the sins and sorrows of men. Francis Xavier and Henry Martyn are amongst the few who have fought the battle and have known the fellowship of our Lord's agonies and death. How near they are to Him now, and how far off in comparison must those who have lived like myself for ever remain, even if we get inside the kingdom where they appear with Jesus in glory."

I saw that the old man was really troubled, and all that I could say was to recall to him the great service he had rendered.

"Yes, Sir, I have done something, but it is not in that I get any consolation now. My only hope is in what the Sin-Bearer has done. If He loved me in Gethsemane and on the cross He will not throw me off now, but even the ground of consolation becomes a ground of rebuke, for did He live and die that I might live a life of selfishness and of struggling for a name? The Cross is at once my greatest joy and greatest grief." Turning his face full upon mine, he said, "Preach Christ, Sir, but above all live Christ. Do not be dazzled by position, by rising in the ministry, by becoming a leading man, by preaching the missionary sermon, and by speaking at Exeter Hall. Can you imagine Paul, or Peter, or John laying themselves out for these paltry honours? If this had been their kind of life could they have said, 'For me to live is Christ.' Many people mourn over the rise of Ritualism, but it will not be without its good, if it calls back ministers and clergymen to the simplicity, self-denial, and yearning for the souls of men, which have so often characterised its priests, and which characterise not a few of them to day. There is as much of heresy in the popular evangelical ministerial life as in Ritualistic dogma. If we preach Christ we do well, but is it not better to live Him? And even in preaching Christ, have we not made a grand mistake? An exclusive preaching of the blood of Christ as the ground of forgiveness is a very poor and inadequate preaching of Him who was so fearless in duty, so patient in suffering,

so tender-hearted to all the afflicted and sad, and who never wearied in well doing."

I shall never forget the earnestness with which the old Doctor spoke. It was the last time I saw him, and I seem to see him now. Heaven itself could scarcely have made his face more radiant. The great regret with which I left him was, that I dared not offer to ease his poverty. Several of us, however, a few days after devised a method by which we could do it without his knowledge, and it is not a little happiness that comes to us when we remember that in some degree we helped to mitigate the last pains and sorrows of this broken-hearted old man.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW PRESIDENT.

Our new President was elected because he was a safe man. He had only published one work, but without doubt it was both psychologically and theologically sound. Neither the "British Banner" nor the "Record" had ever suspected him of "Negative Theology." For some time prior to his advent the committee and the students were of course in a state of considerable excitement. We were assured that golden days were in store for us, and consequently Jones began to speculate on a rise in the box dividends, and the Senior began to dream of settling in some large town, if not over a Metropolitan congregation. When he did come, his appearance in the flesh was quite in keeping with the professorship. He was a short, thin, wiry looking man with a sallow complexion, protruding high cheek bones, a somewhat long solemn face and very short hair, which either never grew or was immediately disposed of. His white necktie was in the form of a stock, the bow of which, however, was usually to be discovered under one of his ears, and very

occasionally under his chin. All his clothes were large enough, but his trousers in this respect were invariably a model pair. No man could have a better heart, and no President ever made the interest of a College more entirely his own. If one of his students settled well, he seemed like a man caught up into the third heavens; and if there was a poor preaching list for the Sunday, it was a week before he recovered from the shock. He not only demanded work, but he worked himself. From January to December he was in his chair at seven o'clock a.m. pronouncing the first words of his lecture. Monthly examinations were inaugurated, and to the overwhelming shame of the slothful, and to the eternal honour and glory of the diligent, were duly placarded in one of the corridors where all that ran might read. If he was destitute of creative power, he had capacity to digest anything. About the literature of his own day he knew comparatively little, but of the past he was an encyclopædia. Never had a man less imagination, but his critical power was as keen as a two-edged sword. No sooner had he stated a theory than he declared that he had either three or five remarks to make, seldom fewer than three, often more than five. He was accustomed to tell us a story which illustrated all his productions in a most singularly happy manner. When the pastor of a London church, he preached a sermon on the "Valley of dry bones." It was reported by the "Penny Pulpit," and on entering the chapel the following Wednesday night to con-

duct the week-day service, a man was calling out to the people as they passed in, "Dr. Anderson's Dry Bones, a penny!"

I ought to speak kindly of this good old man, for it would have been impossible for him to have taken a greater interest in me. How glad with a great sacred joy was he at my ordination! And when he was too infirm to write to me, and was patiently waiting outside the gates of the Golden City, till the Master whom he had served long and well called for him to come up, more than once he dictated letters which were full of his kindly heart, and proved how he could think of others in the greatest and most critical moments of his life.

His theological lectures were all that the committee could desire; and most of the churches would have been more than satisfied if they could have heard them. It was evident that he not only endorsed, but honestly believed in all the old traditional theology. His lectures were dogmatic; they allowed no room for doubt, scarce for difference of opinion. He was the last man in the world to whom I would have carried a problem which was the source of real trouble to me, for no part of his own creed had ever been a trouble to him. Now it so happened that some of the men, for some cause or other, were not very remarkable for their orthodoxy, and this occasionally gave rise to exciting conversation, either in the middle or at the close of a lecture. I well remember how shocked the old man

was, when, after lecturing on "the Fall" in the most approved fashion, Thompson asked him "if he really believed the narrative was literal." "What else can it be, Sir?" shouted the doctor.

"An inspired thought," exclaimed Thompson, "sufficiently, but by no means literally, describing the world's first hours, and symbolising the terrible change which sooner or later comes over every mortal born into it."

"Do you mean to say, Sir," said the Doctor, "that we are all born in the image of God?"

"I don't say that, Doctor," rejoined Thompson, "but I think there's something in that line of Wordsworth's:

'Heaven is about us in our infancy.'

There must be something very divine in childhood, since our Lord took a little child into His arms and declared, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,' thus making childhood the model of the highest life."

"But how do you explain the serpent, Sir," exclaimed the Doctor?

"I think, Doctor," said Thompson, "that the serpent is your difficulty, not mine. You owned that it could scarcely be a literal serpent, and in stating that the curse would not apply to it, and that it is altogether fabulous to suppose that speech belonged to it, you gave sufficient reasons. It is quite as ridiculous to suppose that it was a literal serpent inhabited by a literal devil, for now you must suppose the double miracle of the devil thus incarnate, and the serpent becoming the

vehicle of conversation, and, in addition, the great injustice of a reptile being cursed for that of which it was but the victim, whilst the guilty tempter escaped. You think that the serpent was the devil, but that is certainly not what is recorded, unless the devil is a beast, for it is certainly stated that the 'serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field.'"

On another occasion when the lecture was on the resurrection of the dead, Dowling made the remark that he thought that there was very much to be said for the Swedenborgian view, namely, that death is the resurrection.

"But what of the big trumpet, Sir," said the Doctor? "When are we to hear the archangel's trump?"

"Well, Doctor, I should hear it when I heard the approach of death," said Dowling. "No sound could be more solemn, and the echo of it never dies away."

"But the graves are to be opened, Sir, and the dead are to be raised, and that just before the judgment."

"That, Sir," replied Dowling, "is a very vivid representation, but clearly figurative and pictorial. It appeals to the imagination, and becomes sufficiently solemn and impressive to the universal mind to justify it. With such a picture, painted by such a master-hand, both life and death become more momentous."

"But there's the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Sir. Was his body a phantom? Did not Thomas put his hands into the very wounds of the Crucified? The Swedenborgians have no complete solution of our

Lord's resurrection, and if you believe the narrative that relates it you must believe in the resurrection of the body."

It can easily be imagined that the lectures on everlasting punishment did not pass unchallenged.

"I cannot bring myself to believe it," remarked Denton.

"But thousands of people have believed it," said the Doctor, "and people with all kinds of minds."

"They may think they have, Doctor," put in Thompson, "but I have usually observed that they never believe it about anyone they have loved and known, unless the mind has been in a morbid and unhealthy state. However godless, however depraved, a man's life may have been, friends and relatives can always find some hope in his death, or some ground to exempt him from unending torment."

"But our Lord has declared it, Sir, and so it remains, whether men believe it or not."

"But that is just the question, Doctor," said Campbell. "Once or twice He seems to have said so, but I can sooner believe He was wrongly reported than believe that, for it seems to me to be quite as credible that the Devil should promise eternal life as that our Lord Jesus Christ should threaten endless torment. The everlasting misery of mortals would to my mind be an everlasting cloud over heaven. No doubt sin demands punishment, and I don't believe any man, saint or sinner, can sin without suffering, but unceasing

anguish for the sin of a brief lifetime is out of all proportion. It savours of vengeance and vindictiveness, not of justice and righteousness. If ever dogma libelled the God of love, and did dishonour to His reign, it seems to me that this belief, which consigns man to the burning of fire for ever and ever, without hope of mitigation or relief, does."

"But the preaching of this truth, Sir, has converted men, and when declared with the earnestness of Wesley and Whitfield has made them flee from the wrath to come by thousands."

"But," said Thompson, "do we not find the true secret of their preaching in their earnestness and wonderful dramatic power? Besides, would it not be as horrible to men to contemplate utter annihilation which they can conceive, and is a thought from which all men instinctively recoil, as eternal torment, which is too vast and vague a thought for any man to conceive of, and which has almost as often been joked about as feared."

The Doctor looked very grave, and said that we were branching out into too many subjects to discuss at once, but he believed that in time students would come to his way of thinking.

What was the cause of it I cannot say, but there was enough of this kind of heresy amongst us to have caused quite a consternation in the churches, and to have supplied old Dr. Campbell with fifty letters on the "deplorable state of our colleges," and Lord Shaftesbury with

materials for many a speech on the sad future of his "Dissenting brethren." It was all the more strange because we had signed articles which embraced all that is Calvanistic and Evangelical in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Establishment. All the traditions of the college were orthodox to the last degree. The value of articles is certainly illustrated. Perhaps it may be suggested that much dishonesty was also displayed, or the college would have been left by men whose views were no longer in accord with its creed, but this would be very unfair and unjust, for probably no man had altogether renounced the articles. They represented his faith when he signed them, and for anything he knew to the contrary would do when his curriculum was concluded. Because of what I have known and experienced myself, I have never been able to see the force of objections raised to the variety of doctrine represented by Episcopacy with its common creed, and to which all alike have subscribed. It will be well when articles are considered no longer binding by any church. What is meant by subscription but a surrender of conscience and reason, two of God's greatest revelations, and the two discerning capacities of His other revelation? Articles and creeds have done more than all else to make hypocrites, bigots, and persecutors, as well as to make religion the cold, dead, formal thing it is. If our acceptance of the Bible as God's great and authoritative communication to our world, and of Jesus Christ as His only begotten Son, are not

enough to shape our belief on all other matters, and to keep us true to God's thoughts and inspirations, nothing can, short of terrible injury both to our intellectual and spiritual life.

Amongst other things the Doctor was exceedingly anxious for us to preach at the same place during the whole of the Midsummer vacation, considering this to be a healthy discipline, and indeed a short pastorate. I shall never forget my seven weeks residence at the first place he obtained for me. It was about ten miles from Reading. The old minister was alive but much too infirm to preach. "I prayed, Sir," he said to me, "that God would get me some work to do outside the world, and when old Dr. Bogue sent me here, I knew that the prayer was heard." Certainly not many places could have better answered the description than Moreland. The chapel was on the road side, but you might walk for a couple of miles in almost any direction and scarcely meet with a house. The whole neighbourhood was heath and forests of firs. If there was to be any congregation at all on the Sabbath, it did seem to me that the audience was as likely to be the spirits in prison, or the "spirits of the just made perfect," as mortals yet in the flesh, living in houses made of brick and mortar, and eating beef and mutton.

When the Sunday did come there was no mistake about the two hundred personages who filled the chapel. They were mortals beyond all question, unless we suppose that the women, who sat on the forms at

the right hand side were the angelic portion of the congregation, and the labourers with their smock frocks who occupied the benches on the left, were the representatives of a world which is a long way from the heavenly; but in this case the little shopkeepers and farmers who sat in the centre, and were clearly the aristocracy of the place, must be regarded as principalities and powers. It is very difficult to classify the singers. They sat in a large square box, which was called the gallery, and which was situated over the door, the entrance being by a ladder from the other side. About twelve persons sat in it, four of whom played bassoons. It is no use attempting a description of the music. The tunes most delighted in were "Lydia" and "Crucifixion." The services were in the morning and afternoon, most of the people bringing their dinners and eating them in the minister's house, or in the garden, or under the firs.

The minister's salary was the house he lived in and fifty pounds a year. Not only had the old man subsisted on this, but he had brought up Charles, who was a schoolmaster; David, who was a tradesman, flourishing under the shadow of Canterbury cathedral, and Tryphena and Tryphosa, neither of whom were married but very likely to be. It was just as well that they had accepted lovers, for this was a very likely place for a student to fall in love. Neither men nor women of twenty years of age can afford to be left for weeks alone, sitting in gardens, and walking along

lanes fringed with wood and made picturesque by summer flowers. If Eve had been as ugly as the serpent that tempted her, I take it that Adam would have been fascinated by her, and, if a poet, would have sung the praise of her eyes and form. But neither Tryphena nor Tryphosa were ugly, on the contrary, they were very good looking, and had lost neither grace, style, nor attractiveness by being brought up and educated "out of the world." Their names scarcely do them justice, for names are very suggestive, and somehow or other the women labelled with Scriptural names never make a very fair show in the flesh. Whether in consequence of their appellatives, they feel it binding upon them to surround themselves with a certain amount of sanctimoniousness and prudishness, I cannot say, but it is quite certain that the modern Rebecca's and Sarah's are in no way good representatives of the originals, and contrast very unfavourably with the coquettishness and captivating looks and manners of the Fanny's and Kate's. Nothing, however, could give you a falser idea of Tryphena and Tryphosa than their names. Tryphena's lover came from Reading every Saturday night and stayed till Monday morning, and it was quite clear that he never came too often. Tryphosa's came almost every night, and if he had a failing in her eyes, I fancy it was the bashfulness of a country swain. No proof was wanting that in both cases there was love-making. On more than one occasion, when wandering out alone among the firs,

I was obliged to break a branch, or give some other token of my approach, or in a few moments I should have been in the heavenly places, where a man knows not whether he is in the flesh or out of it, and where he hears sounds and sees sights which it is not lawful to utter.

The old minister lost none of their love, and perhaps they loved him all the more because they had found another outlet in which their affection flowed. They were proud of their patriarchal father and they had reason to be. I would sooner have that old man's character than all the fame of the greatest of our ministers. The world has heard little of him. A few lines constitute his biography in the "Year Book." When he went to the County Association Meetings it was usually to take the lowest place, and, perhaps, on no occasion to move a resolution; but for fifty years he had lived and toiled in the Master's service as some brave and consecrated apostle might have done. He had been his own gardener, joiner, and, to a large extent, tailor, to make up his livelihood, and yet no minister in the denomination had carried himself with greater dignity or independence. It was in vain that the County Association offered to help him by supplementing his salary, and as vain the pleading of the people for an Anniversary Service. When asked how it was that whilst other churches around were having Anniversaries, and at Pepper Mr. Chater rarely realised less than sixty pounds on the occasion, many persons

coming from London on purpose to help him, he always replied, "Because I cannot eat the bread that does not come to me from my own work." Such men as this have bread to eat of which the self-seekers know nothing. Their poverty and hunger are the guarantee of the wealth and plenty to which they are heirs. If the Master paid His servants in the coin of this world, abundance would have been this man's lot, but the law of the kingdom is greatest tribulation for the greatest souls. The noblest are so oft the poorest and sorest-tried, because they have strength and manhood to bear the trial. Men like John the Baptist eat locusts and wild honey and are banished to the wilderness. It is the effeminate that get ease, comfort, and large salaries. God shows His favour to His servants as a general does to his best officers, by stationing them where they will have most to endure and the hottest fire to face. The successors of Paul and Peter are neither Bishops nor Independent ministers, but men of like calibre and character, fearlessly braving like dangers and bearing like crosses.

This man's influence was one of the powers by which God's Spirit worked upon my heart. As from day to day I read his unwritten life, how hollow, how little, how guilty, in the light of it seemed my own! Very often I shunned his presence just because I felt that the tone of his conversation was so infinitely above my own. The spirit that dwelt in him seemed to rebuke mine, though nothing could be more generous or more

cordial than his manner and words. The last time I saw him he urged me with all his kindliness and modesty to accept the invitation to become his successor, which he told me the people would presently send. I informed him, as I did the people afterwards, that I could not leave college yet.

But the time for leaving did come, and it was preceeded by many anxious months. Where shall I get to? was a question I asked myself not unfrequently. Some of our best men had settled over places and with incomes where they were quietly starving in a living grave, and some of our poorest had taken leading positions in the foremost towns and cities of England. My observation had been quite sufficient to convince me that whatever my qualifications might be, they formed no data whatever from which to argue. They did not preclude the possibility of a settlement with five hundred a year, nor did they guarantee exemption from fifty pounds a year. If men had the places for which they were qualified, my conviction was then what it now is, that very few men could stay where they are. I soon came to another conclusion and it was that as a rule the churches that gave the smallest income would be the hardest to please. One church I visited informed me, through its representatives, that they wanted a man of Newman Hall's stamp, but that they were willing to dispense with some of his working talent and pulpit power for greater originality of thought. The leading deacon of another church said

that they wanted a man of Henry Allon's intellect, but with more of the imaginative faculty and emotional tendency. This church offered a hundred and fifty, the one that had an opening for a Newman Hall volunteered a hundred!

But I ought not to complain, for I received an invitation from a church in Kent, from one in Bristol, from one in London, and ultimately from one about which I shall further speak.

CHAPTER IV.

SETTLING.

THE church of which I have just spoken, and over which I settled, was in a town situated amid some of the most picturesque scenery in the south of England; indeed, an hour's ride could transport you to some of the most favourite resorts of painters and poets.

Nature here delighted in assuming her tenderer forms. Even the brows of her hills were wreathed with garlands of beauty. In the valleys she was clothed with loveliness of which winter scarcely robbed her. The charm of her landscapes cannot be told; they were adorned with the glory of brides. Ever and anon they hid their beauties with pretended coyness, and then appeared again with richer luxuriance and greater wantonness, thus tempting and seducing into bye-paths and windings for miles. Sterner spots were not wanting. Here and there a ravine gave evidence of the mighty conflict that had been waged in the days of old by the Titanic powers. There were grim-looking cliffs too, which overhung the sea and into whose caverns the booming waves emptied themselves with strange unearthly sounds; and to see these

in the tempest, when every billow that broke against them was like the storm-spirit maddened into fury, and when the thunder reverberated over them and the lightning quivered, was to see sights weird and awful enough to remember for life.

I do not know why I should say that the church surrounded by such a country was the one over which I "settled," for though "settlement" is the usual term to designate a pastorate among Independents, it is perhaps the least appropriate, unless that can be called a settlement where volcanic forces are sleeping and any moment may make themselves unpleasantly felt. Instead of talking of our settlements we might very properly talk of our sojournings, for if we are not "strangers and pilgrims" amongst the churches what are we? Our fathers did settle. They took a charge on leaving college and were buried by their people. We, their children, may get killed by the people, but we are too old for them long before we are ready to die. But mine was a model church. The congregation was by no means large, but I never had less than £220 a year, and I was never irritated, never annoyed, never pronounced heretical, never slandered, never accused of neglecting the people, and never persecuted in any manner whatever. The population of the borough was nearly ten thousand, but the oldest inhabitant could never remember the chapel under a cloud. A considerable prestige, indeed, belonged to it; partly because it had enjoyed the ministry of some very able and honour-

able men; partly because it had appreciated them and never turned them adrift in a storm; and partly because of the social position and respectability of many of the worshipers. To be the minister of such a church was a real pleasure. The clergy never attempted to patronise me, for it was out of the question.

My deacons were not perfect, but they were as far from being tyrannical as they were from being obsequious. They put a proper value on themselves, and therefore properly valued the minister. Mr. Molling was too old to engage in any active work, but we always liked him to be at our meetings, for his snow-white hair and his face shining all over with kindness and goodness made us all feel happier and better. Messrs. Morley and Gutridge were somewhat reticent and retiring, but solid, sterling, upright, and reliable men; and when occasion demanded them in the foremost ranks, they were always there, especially if it was to bear the heat and burden of the day. My active man was Mr. Angus, and if he had a weakness for having the preference for being the minister's leading man, and feeling that he was the pillar upon which the church, chapel, and minister all leaned, few of my brethren will feel much resentment towards him. Only sympathise with his weak eye, and attach a proper value to what he did, and he would work for the place from Monday morning until Saturday night, and work harder for it on the Sunday than he ever worked for himself on any two days during the week.

But by far the best men in the congregation were some of the women. Mrs. Hutchison was a lady only too rarely to be met with; well read, very refined, quite literary, a good linguist, an extensive traveller, with a good position and fine nature, she was universally looked up to. She was a widow, but had the advantage of being rich, and lived at Brook, the chief and most aristocratic suburb. Very few loved her, for only to a very few was she approachable, and to a still smaller number was she known; but she was always respected, and her opinion at chapel was next to law. At Brook she was surrounded by church people, and though it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a tradesman or an ordinary mortal of any description to find admittance to an institution called "Society" there, she, a dissenter, was the very centre of it, and could open and shut the door at her pleasure. If she had been a weak woman she would long ago have been a Church-woman, but being strong, and respecting her own convictions as sacred, she made dissent respected even where it would have been sneered at. Amongst other things, she found a wife for the Vicar of Brook in one of her Nonconformist friends, who had long been anxious to embrace the Church, and had no objection to embracing the Vicar on the same occasion; and she opened the door of this mystic circle in which she moved, and towards which all the town people looked with such envy and yearning, to her dissenting minister, and gave him

a place which was never challenged, but which otherwise a carriage and pair could scarcely have gained for him. Mrs. Morrow was decidedly the "better half" of a banker, and considerably more than half of the Dorcas and missionary societies. She was somewhat aspiring, and therefore had made a hundred efforts to get into society at Brook, and as often failed; but the next best thing was to have occasion to call at Mrs. Hutchison's, or to be the first to inform her of something fresh in the chapel or out of it. If she could only meet Mrs. Hutchison, or walk up street with her, she was in high feather indeed. If she had her special weakness, she was a useful, worthy, kind-hearted woman beyond all doubt. Nothing was easier than to offend her, but as long as she was offended she was simply miserable. She did her best to let you see that she did not care, and could afford to treat the matter in a very off-hand way, whereas all the time she clearly demonstrated that the matter was utterly destroying her peace. She was restless, but fortunately her hands were always full of some good work. If she would have done anything to climb a little higher in the social scale, she would also have sacrificed much to make those far beneath her happier and gladder. A much sterner, but no less influential and estimable woman, was Miss Tonge. She belonged to the old school, and accordingly shook her head at the books Mrs. Hutchison read and the company she kept. She was almost seventy years of age, and therefore usually

made her visits in a Bath chair, but she was the superintendent of the girls' school, and was never absent from her place either there or at chapel. All the year round she was in a cold bath at six o'clock in the morning, at seven the bell rang for prayers, at eight breakfast commenced, and by ten at night not a light was burning in the house. There was no alternative for visitors, and if she had friends to tea they knew that when the wine and cake were brought out at eight, notice to quit was served. She was by no means amiable, but she was the very impersonation of justice, and to be able to give fifty or a hundred pounds very frequently to some worthy object, she would sit in the depth of winter with the merest pretence of a fire, and have her clothes dyed and turned, and turned and dyed again. Under the designation of "A Friend," many a society received through me her help. Mrs. Warding was not less in her way an important personage. Work was a necessity to her, and being a devout woman with any quantity of enthusiasm, she had a field which she worked with great results in a mother's meeting. If there was money to collect, she was ready to give the time and labour. There was just a disposition between Mrs. Morrow and her to claim and wear the same laurels; no duel, however, was ever fought, nor did matters ever grow serious enough to be suggestive of danger. A night's sleep was usually sufficient to heal the wounds which either had made. If for a day there was shyness, the next found them the best of friends.

Such being the leaders, it is easy to predict for the minister not only a smooth, but a very happy pastorate. They all had their own methods of helpfulness too. If a new book appeared, which the minister, as a leader of thought ought to read, Mrs. Hutchison either sent it as a loan or a present. If I went out for a holiday, or up to the May meetings, Miss Tonge was sure that my expenses had recently been very heavy, and that the Church had been a cause of it, and hoped I would accept the trifle she put into my hand. The trifle would turn out to be a ten or twenty pound note, and was offered with such lady-like grace as enhanced the gift in value. If I needed a change, Mrs. Morrow provided it in a day's excursion, or lodgings for a day or two at one of the watering places. If I was unwell there was no end to Mrs. Warding's attentions.

Of course my pastorate was inaugurated by a series of tea meetings, to give me a general introduction to the people, and then a series of "evenings out" was commenced. At Mrs. Hutchison's, I met a number of the Brook people, amongst whom were a Lieutenant-Colonel Foster, Captain Graham, a naval officer, and a Mrs. Newbold, with her three eligible daughters, who was very gracious; indeed she told me in confidence that she had always looked upon Independent ministers as amongst the most cultivated clergymen, and she whispered to me the assurance that so far from her daughters being bigoted, Emily had several times said,

"She did not see why we could not occasionally go to chapel;" and she was very anxious to impress me with the fact that, if ever I should be dull, and a little singing or music would enliven me, they would be only too happy to provide it. Of course the Vicar and his wife were present, and the Unitarian minister was also there. None of us appeared contaminated, and I do not think any one would have been if there had been a Primitive Wesleyan minister, and a Roman Catholic priest. No one obtruded his opinions, but no one seemed ashamed of them. I was not less a Dissenter than when sitting alone with the Liberator, and not less Evangelical than when, on the approaching Sabbath day, I declared that He who sat on the throne of the Universe with the Everlasting Father, receiving in common with Him the adoration of angels, and through whose blood it was that the robes of all the ransomed had been washed, and who was not only the Head of the Church on earth but of thrones, principalites, and powers, could be none other than "Very God." Outside that meeting, I have no doubt there were those present who would have regarded me as an enemy of the church, and the Unitarian minister as an infidel, but there all differences were forgotten; and this is one of the means which Christians must use if they would lose sight of all their prejudices and bigotries. We have met on the same platform talking platitudes of unity for long enough; the barriers between us all are so many and so strong, because when we leave the platform we are afraid to

touch each other's hands or pollute each other's houses. If we do not meet upon the platform as enemies, we meet as utter strangers. All that is wanted to crush out of many of our hearts all intolerance and much shyness, is a better and fuller knowledge of each other and of our opinions. The differences in the creeds are not half so vast as most imagine them; nothing magnifies so much as estrangement; and if we or our brethren are wrong, are attack and assault the best method of getting wrong righted? The drawing-room needs to be more widely and freely opened. God would use it to bring us all closer together and nearer to the Cross.

Before I had got the round of the "evenings out," I had seen most of the older members of the church who were unable to leave their homes. These visits more than all else helped me to realise the reality of my vocation, and the greatness of the work upon which I had entered. I had come to look, as all theological students are apt to do, upon religion as something to speculate about, to argue about, to preach about, to make forcible paragraphs about, but here I saw it living, breathing, bowing to God's will, and bringing the other world closer to this, for I saw that the poor were richer with God than lords and ladies can be without Him, and that bed-ridden men and women could turn their afflictions into a hymn of praise. Satan was as real to many of these people as to Martin Luther when the Reformer threw an inkstand at him.

They felt the force of temptation as mightily as their Lord felt it, when he battled with it in the wilderness.

Old Christiana Fallows was lying upon a bed from which it was pain even to move her, and there she had lain for years, but if she had been resting upon a couch of gold and purple, and lulled by the sounds of sweetest music, she could not have been more perfectly happy, and if the heavens over her had opened, and Jesus had shone out upon her as He did on Stephen, she could not have been more sure of His watchful, tender care, nay, whan I told her that Christ had gone before, she could say, "He's not gone altogether, Sir, and He's no stranger to this poor room. Many a time I've more than seen Him, and more than felt Him, and more than heard Him. No crucifix or sacrament could bring Him so near to me, Sir, as He is every day. When I was well I used to wonder what "sitting with Christ in the heavenly places" meant. I know now. They think I wander, Sir, sometimes, but I don't. My daughter Betsey there says that I get fancies, but it's not that. I never was one to dream much, but it seems to me that since my body has gone weaker, and my faith and love stronger, that they have just been taking the very place of my hands and eyes."

Edward Monk interested me in no small degree, and little by little I led him on till he volunteered to give me the story of his life, which he related as follows: "I've been a sailor, Sir, and a very wild 'un I've been. I took to sea when the lass I loved flung me overboard

and sailed off with another lad. I'm an old man, Sir, and may be you won't expect to find me much sentimental, but I'm not much of a wiser man about this than I was then. Many a briny tear I sheds, but I expect to meet her again on the eternal shore, for we've both had a roughish voyage, and she's got into the haven first. He never cared for her, Sir, and he killed her, not in cold blood to hang for it like, but just as bad. I'm not going into that now, because I didn't see it all myself, and for other reasons. I took ship as soon as they were wed, for if I'd a stopped I might 'a been the death of her, and him too. I was a rough fellow, Sir, there wasn't a man aboard as cursed as I did. God help me! as I think of it. When the storm raved, I've blasphemed till the men fairly trembled. When there was danger they was mostly afeared, and you didn't hear many oaths then; that only seemed to make me worse, for what did I care? Nellie was lost to me, and if I had anything to pray about, it was that we might all be wrecked and never outride the tempest. This state of things continued. I had been, Sir, pretty well over the world and was coming back from India. I've been in many a storm, but never in such a one as on that voyage. The night was black as pitch, save when the lightning zig-zagged and fairly dazzled us. The ship heaved and rolled like a drunken man and behaved awful, but sometimes she creaked and moaned like, as if she was sighing and praying for us, and this made me in a worse way nor usual. I

was just giving vent to a volley of oaths, when I all at once fell right back over, for there was a flash like a door opening in heaven itself, and if ever I seed Nellie it was then, and if ever there was a look in any one's face that could melt a man's heart, there was in hers. I kneeled down and offered up a prayer that night, Sir." Turning towards me, he said, "Maybe you don't believe that I saw Nellie, but I do. When I began to pray, I began to read my Bible, and I read in the Old Testament about Samuel coming back, and in the New about Moses and Elias shining in glory, and why shouldn't Nellie? But it's certain, Sir, that when I got back I found that Nellie was dead, and I was not surprised, because I expected it, and after what I'd seen and felt, I'd a been disappointed if it hadn't been. You need'nt say anything to her, Sir, but the young woman that let you in at the door was the child she left behind. I hadn't much trouble of getting her, for *he* didn't care, and I've kept her close to me ever since. Before I got to land then, Sir, I was another man. No offence to preaching, but it was Nellie's face converted me; she preached from heaven, where she's waiting for me now, and by and bye will more than make amends for leaving me. You believe in meeting again and living together, don't you, Sir? I do. I'd never thought about it till I saw Nellie, and then I began to think about it night and day. Why, it would 'a been cruel of the Lord to convert me and make me long to be with her, as I've never ceased to do, if He

had'nt meant to give her to me and make us happy together. If Moses knew Elias and was with Him in glory, I couldn't fail to know Nellie and be with her. I've heard many good folks say that they can leave this matter, that it is not material and fundamental, but it is material and fundamental with me, Sir, and them as leaves it isn't overburdened with a stock of love. If a man has a heart he cannot live on glory. He wants another heart to feed on, and he wants to know that somebody else is feeding on his. The first parson I talked to on this subject said we ought to be content to know that we shall see Jesus, be near Him and love Him, but if Nellie brought me to Him in that storm, and more than anything else has kept me close to Him in storm and sunshine since, why there'll be no harm if she takes me by the hand and fetches me to Him in the other world; and when I think of this I not only feel content but full of holy joy. I meant to tell you, Sir, that not a soul on board ever knew what I'd seen. I couldn't talk about Nellie to men that I had heard cursing and talking of women as they did, and so I kept all shut up in my own heart. They saw very well that there'd been a mighty change, and they often twitted me, for not all the world could make me use bad language now and live as I lived then. Preaching and chapel had nothing to do with what I'd experienced, but I made a point of attending to these things when I reached land. I went to Church, and I liked both the building and the parson, but reading

prayers didn't suit me. I'd done no reading in my praying, and I didn't take to it now. It seemed like saying a lesson to the Lord. The Ranters make too much shouting of it. The Independents didn't seem to make very much out of it either; indeed, Sir, I never pray at Chapel so well as I do at home and when I can feel alone with Nellie."

CHAPTER V.

SERMONISING.

LIKE most Independent ministers I have always loved preaching, and endured visiting. The curate finds his work in the houses of his parishioners; Methodist ministers have also been at home in making calls, eating dinners, and drinking teas; but the gift has never descended very copiously upon the Congregational ministry. Mingle with any Independent congregation in the kingdom, and whatever else is said about the pastor, the complaint will be almost universal, that he does not visit. I do know one exception. A ministerial friend was nearly pestered to death with an outcry to visit. He resolved that into whatever house he entered, at whatever hour of the day, and under whatever circumstances, he would request reading and prayer, and let the remainder of the conversation be strictly in keeping therewith. There was never another complaint.

If Independent ministers have their failings, they are not excelled as a body in the pulpit. Whilst their teaching is Scriptural, it is also broad, manly, and

thoughtful. This is almost universally recognised. The sermon is the strength of the denomination; and, I may also add, its weakness. If the minister cannot preach, no gift, no attainment can long avail. His congregation will melt away inevitably, for the same people who will hear poor preaching in other chapels, will not hear it in those of the Congregational order. For the sake of being in their own meeting the Methodists will endure a lay brother who tells them a little "antidote," and then grows eloquent on "Roman heagles" and "Greek horators!" If this is not proof that the body is penetrated with the martyr spirit, what is? Churchmen will joke about the "Gospel hash" they had on Sunday, and then go through rain, fog, and dirt to sit down to it the next Sabbath. The reason perhaps partly is, that the Methodists glorify Methodism, and that the Churchmen very properly attach a supreme importance to the prayers. Much as Independents talk of their principles, if there was nothing else to hold the body together, its existence would not be worth much, and this is said in no disparagement of its principles, but in the conviction that an undue importance has been attached to the sermon. The estimation in which preaching is held puts the minister in danger of becoming a mere artist; the discourse an entertainment, oratorical, or intellectual; and the audience so many hearers expecting to be gratified and charmed. The sermon is our golden calf to which almost everything is sacrificed.

Before I was fairly settled all my college sermons had been preached. What a day of agony became the Saturday! If Monday morning brought a sense of relief, the relief had gone and the distress set in by Tuesday. What shall be my text, I began to ask? This question was not so easily answered. Wednesday and often Thursday had dawned before a text had struck me, and after this I had to strike it back again. Whether it was most difficult to strike it or be struck by it, is not easy to say. For from the beginning I have never been able to make sermons from the pages of an "Evangelical Preacher," or a "Pulpit Assistant." Nor have I been able to find in all my texts, "The Characters of the Persons Addressed," and "The Nature of the Exhortation," or "The Doctrine Assumed," and "The Practical Teaching." Few things have been so tortured as texts. If the Bible could point out its enemies, inquisitors, and persecutors, they would not all be Romish priests. If infidels have persecuted the Church, and the Church has persecuted the parsons, it is no less true that the parsons have persecuted the texts. Here are illustrations of what I mean.

"Take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people."—Isaiah lvii. 14. Preached at the Poulter Chapel, London, January, 1859.

In treating this text, the Preacher's great fidelity to Scripture, and originality of conception, discovered the stumbling blocks, which it was his mission to remove, to be as follows: 1. Original Sin; 2. Redemption;

3. Election; 4. Reprobation; 5. Regeneration; 6. Sanctification.

The preacher, being a D.D., felt no difficulty in removing these stumbling blocks in the seven minutes allotted to each, so that in less than an hour all mysteries were cleared up, and we were prepared for the close application to saints and sinners respectively, with which the comprehensive discourse terminated.

"Ho!"—Isaiah lv. 1. Preached by the Rev. Isaac Puritan in a City Church.

I. The Speaker, or Who says "Ho"?

1. God the Father; 2. God the Son; 3. God the Holy Ghost; 4. God the Trinity.

II. The medium of communication, or by whom "Ho!" is echoed.

1. The Prophets; 2. The Apostles; 3. Ministers; 4. Laymen.

III. The persons addressed, or to whom "Ho!" is shouted.

1. The Jews; 2. The Gentiles; 3. The Old; 4. The Young; 5. The Rich; 6. The Poor.

IV. The necessity of the call, or why "Ho!" is uttered.

1. Because the people are sleeping; 2. Because they are losing; 3. Because they are dying.

V. The emphasis of the language, or how "Ho!" is declared.

1. Threateningly; 2. Persuasively; etc., etc.

The above sketch is as much as I could carry away

with me, but by no means does justice to the subdivisions which, under the remarkable analytic touch of the reverend magician, multiplied, when there was nothing even to account for them.

Above all things I decreed that what I said should be my own. This is simply saying I was honest and resolved to be. The man who steals sermons, or even paragraphs, is not a whit better than a thief. Thieving is of various kinds. There was something sublime in the Dick Turpin sort, and there is something just as sniveling and cowardly in filching "extracts." If such a man were a lawyer, he would not hesitate to take a mean advantage of his client; and if he were a confidential servant, trinkets would be missing. Quotations from great discourses are legitimate enough if the preacher lets it be known where the quotation ends as well as where it begins. I once heard a man commence a noble sermon by saying, "In the words of an eloquent living author," and as he presently took a drink of water and used his handkerchief, the audience was under the impression that a greater than Solomon was about to speak. On opening "The Homilist," after returning home, I discovered that the "eloquent living author" was quoted right up to the Amen. It is only right to say that this was not the fault of "The Homilist."

But policy would have been my salvation even if honesty had not; for only in cases where the preacher is an actor can he produce such an impression by the

sayings of another man, however great and thoughtful, as by his own. If only he has worked his brain and utters what is true to his convictions, nothing will be half such a power in his hands, unless he is content to make the pulpit a stage, and from being an ambassador of Christ's, is willing to become a reciter. No doubt Shakespeare in the mouth of Phelps, and Tennyson in the mouth of Bellew, are more effective than anything which either the great tragedian or the reader could compose for themselves, but they are artists by profession, and the more perfect their art, the greater their own self-respect and the respect of their hearers. In declaiming another preacher's discourse, the speaker must have lost his conscience, if he has not lost his self-respect, to begin with; and even if he feels his conscience no impediment, the time at his disposal is scarcely long enough to make other men's productions so thoroughly his own as to render them with due dramatic effect. I knew an old man who for twenty years had been seeking a new pastorate, and said that he thought nothing of either Chalmers, Melville, or Parsons, for he had preached them again and again, and he had never got a call with any of them. "One of his own," he added, "beat them all hollow." He was right, for that got him his present church.

Of course I did not preach all I made. On referring to the MS. book I kept at this period, I find something like a hundred sermon sketches, of which the following are specimens:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."—Matthew vii. 15.

Subject: "Wolves in sheep's clothing."

I. The nature of the animals.

1. They seek a living; 2. They cannot buy one; 3. They are not easily satisfied. (No offence to Curates intended.)

II. The clothing of the beasts.

1. Not a good fit; 2. Not made to order.

"And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass."—Numbers xxii. 28.

I. A very common occurrence.

The mouth of this ass was opened, and this is common to all ages, to all peoples, and was never commoner than now. It was a miracle for an ass to speak in Balaam's time, but to accomplish such a result in these days, it is no longer needful for the Lord to open the ass's mouth.

II. A very rare occurrence.

The ass spake sense. "It is the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes." Proof this, that wisdom is not the monopoly of the sages. The world's indebtedness to its donkeys may be here remarked upon.

III. A symbolic occurrence.

The ass preached a sermon. Illustrate this from the donkey which had been grazing in St. Laurence's churchyard, and putting its head into one of the church windows whilst the reverend rector was discoursing,

began to bray, whereupon, a devout hearer rising, made the remark, "One at a time, gentlemen."

IV. A humiliating occurrence.

The ass rebuked the prophet, opposed, and turned him back. How much donkeyism have the prophets to encounter still! There is the donkey of the Diaconate, of Officialism, of Journalism, etc.

I soon discovered, what I yet feel, that there are four all-essential qualities for making sermons: 1. Mental capacity; 2. Work; 3. Enthusiasm; 4. Loyalty to Christ.

The last ought to be first, for what is a sermon worth which does not at once honour Christ, and illustrate the mission of His life, by yearning with pity and love to seek and save the lost? If a sermon is not the echo of Christ's voice, the disclosing of Christ's heart, the detailing of Christ's work, the unveiling of Christ's person, or the revelation of Christ's grace towards guilty and outcast men, how can it be the power of God, or the wisdom of God, either unto the salvation of the lost, or unto them that believe? If men are ever to see the invisible God, they must see God in Christ. If they are to be changed from "glory unto glory," it must be by looking into the face of Christ. If they are to know the ideal life to which they are called, and which henceforth is with them to be a real life, they must see the divine beauty, purity, and devotion, which through all temptation and agony of soul dwelt in Christ. If they are to hold fellowship

with the Father and their life is to feel Him, like a great power, encircling, overshadowing, and helping, they must know the love of Christ. It is only when Christ is uplifted that men are drawn unto Him; and who but he whose heart is loyal towards Christ will seek in every sermon to glorify Him!

Enthusiasm is essential to success in any vocation, but most of all to the preacher. It communicates itself in the power of a life. The works of genius herself are dead unless she has been in the soul of their Creator. Her breath, like the breath of the Deity can make the very clay alive with the highest, greatest life. Statesmen, orators, poets, artists, are made and sustained by her. Emoluments may make men selfish, but it needs enthusiasm to make them great, be their calling what it may. She is the great high-priest without whose anointing there never spoke a mighty prophet in God's temple. She is the source of inspiration which gives potency and skill to the humblest worker in all God's world, and without her Christ's ministers are less than the least.

Enthusiasm is needed in part because work is needed. Good sermons are thought out, and to think out two or three sermons for every week demands hard and untiring labour. Sermons begun and ended on the Saturday cannot bear fruit much longer than the Sunday, if indeed they bear any then. Fluent men and easy talkers are exposed to the terrible temptation of trusting to the moment, and what a bitter, unprofitable

moment in course of years it becomes, when, like a parrot, they are repeating the same platitudes! No doubt great inspirations are sudden. Oken was gazing upon the bleached skull of a deer, when the truth suddenly flashed upon him that the bones of the cranium were only the repetition of the vertebræ. Quick as an apple falls from a tree did Newton discover the great law of gravitation, thereby both immortalising his name and revolutionising science. These are only illustrations, but do they not also go to prove the fact that great revelations come to the great workers? Joseph de Maistre, we are told, filled note-book after note-book. In one place he mentions that he had some thirty of these folios over the head of his writing table. In all the range of literature, science, and art, is there a work which has been acknowledged great which does not bear upon it the image and superscription of a great worker? Neither Telford nor Hugh Miller were men of genius, but their laboriousness knew no bounds, hence their works do magnify their names. On the other hand, Tintoretto and Flaxman failed as geniuses, but won their laurels by unflagging labour. However great a man's ideality, he must toil, or, with all his capacity for variety, the sermons that might be as luxuriant and changeful as the landscape will be arid and monotonous as the desert.

This brings me to say that there must be mental capacity. Something may be made of one talent. Hard worked it may become five. But the men of five

or ten talents are the demand of Christ in these last days. Great talent does not mean incomprehensibility. The men of giant power are oftenest characterised by the simplicity of children. There have been times when by the feeblest intellects God has worked out the greatest purposes. We are not only living in the nineteenth century, but in the days of Darwinism and Comtism; when material science has such advocates as Huxley; fiction such writers as Dickens; rationalism such advocates as Strauss; and when such men as Mill, if not hostile to the Cross, have not yet bowed the knee to it; and though we may be sure that God will still work His work by the foolishness of preaching, may we not be quite as sure that foolish preaching, or even feeble preaching will loosen Christ's hold upon the world?

I feel that I am writing against myself, but these are the reflections with which I condemned myself as entirely at the time of which I am now writing, as I do at this moment.

When, indeed, I look back upon this period of my ministerial life, I am utterly amazed at the long-suffering and forbearance of the people of my first love. My ideal sermon has yet to be preached, but the sermons I preach now are perfection itself compared to those I preached then. The remembrance of the piety and intelligence of many of my hearers only increases my amazement at the generosity and attention with which they listened to me; but probably it was owing

to these qualities in them which secured such results, for my observation has proved to me beyond all doubt that the grumblers of the sanctuary, who are always longing for food which they never obtain, are not very much troubled with intense hungerings and thirstings after righteousness, whilst those who never "get anything to think about from the sermon" are just as likely to be intellectually quickened by it as are a flock of sheep by the stars.

Not only did I never hear a complaint of the quality of my sermons, but I was equally free from objections about the doctrine of them, and this is worth recording, when it is considered that about every third or fourth man in each denomination, has his own distinct opinions of what constitutes the gospel, and regards something as belonging to the fundamentals which others do not. To one man the sermon is only good and the doctrine scriptural, if it brings in the millennium, exalts the saints to thrones, and overthrows the wicked with a terrible destruction; to another, the Papacy must be proved to be the "woman in scarlet," the "man of sin," and "the mother of harlots," and the hour of its fall determined by mystic numbers, expressed declarations of prophets, and the "signs of the times;" to a third, it must fence round the elect with privileges and promises, and demonstrate beyond all dispute that their names were written in the Book of Life, not only before they had any name, but before the world's foundations were laid, and make it as indisputably clear that all

the world beside has resting on it the Creator's malediction, and that if many imagine they are going to be saved, they are only grandly mistaken. There are some who think the Sabbath question vital, and others who think its observance abrogated. Some hold, that if the whole counsel of God is to be declared, prophecy must be expounded, and others, that all such speculations are not only vain, but seeking to know the things that are not revealed, but belong to God. A considerable section declare that the Jews have been neglected, and that before there is a shadow of hope for the Gentiles, they must be restored to Jerusalem and made perfectly happy; on the other hand, not a few have given up all hope of the Jews both for this world and the next. There are those who think that the "Verilies" and the "I wills" of the Scripture have not had sufficient attention, and those who think that if the errors of the past are to be corrected, and we are to have the simplicity of the truth, the "particles" and "prepositions" must be more closely examined. It is edifying to note that the "simplicity of the truth," is wrought into every phase that can perplex and bewilder men.

But when a sermon is made, it has to be delivered, and that, with the bulk of people, is the chief thing. At this period, I committed to memory whatever I spoke on the Sabbath day. Perhaps the *memoriter* system had as fair a chance with me as it can have with most men; for, in the first place, I had a good memory to begin with, and also habituated it to the exercise

through years, and was never inconveniently troubled with nervousness in the pulpit. My experience of a better system compels me to declare against it, for compared to it, preaching from carefully prepared notes which I do now, is deliverance from bondage into a glorious freedom, increase of self-possession, and far greater effectiveness. There may be less finish about the discourse, but what is lost in the "get up" is gained in the substance, the time devoted to the adornments being free for thinking. Before coming to this method, I passed through various processes, as may be imagined. First of all the manuscript was placed upon the Bible and never looked at, then it was glanced at occasionally, and before many months nothing else was glanced at until the "Amen" was pronounced. My own experience is a stronger testimony against reading, than against *memoriter* preaching. It has advantages which cannot be denied. If you have a poor sermon, for instance, you do not face the people, and if it lacks interest, you do not see them go to sleep. But it has disadvantages. You cannot feel that you are master of your position, and therefore do not realize that conscious strength and power which he does, who has grasped the subject about which he is to speak, and has made it so thoroughly and entirely his own that he needs no help, save the help which all true men who proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ get from His unseen presence, and certainly get none the less from throwing aside a crutch. If there are congregations which pre-

fer reading, it is chiefly because they have never been accustomed to good speaking, and if there are others who have asked the minister to read, it is mostly because the extemporaneous exhibitions were more than flesh and blood could endure. There is something in the bare fact of a man going into the pulpit twice on the Sabbath, and without any seen external aid, addressing the people on some great theme with thoughtfulness and ease, which soon claims their sympathy and commands their respect. Perhaps I ought only to speak for myself, but when I read my sermons, I found nothing more difficult than to think of what I was reading. Off went my thoughts as soon as my lips were fairly opened. Before the first division was concluded, I was shuddering at the gash I had given myself when shaving, or speculating on the stars. There is only a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and, perhaps, I never passed so often from one to the other as when I read my sermons. Thank God for deliverance!

CHAPTER VI.

CHURCH AND DISSENT.

BEFORE I had yet received the last call from my own congregation, the Vicar of Brook shewed me the courtesy and good-will involved in a visit. As I was not in his parish, it was all the more agreeable. It was quite evident, too, that he did not place himself in the light of an ecclesiastical superior, to whom, for this special favour, I was to pay marked honour. I took an opportunity of telling him that I was very anxious to work harmoniously with him, and would do all in my power to secure that end. I added, that as I did not wish to sail under false colours, I ought to say that I was a member of the "Liberation Society." He thanked me for my candour, told me that his father-in-law belonged to it, and also Mrs. Hutchison, so that if that society pulled down the Church, the downfall would not altogether be owing to strangers and enemies. "I have no patience with the Society, Mr. Wilkinson," he said, "but I hope I know better than to regard every subscriber to it as an intolerable bigot and a mortal foe. My own conviction is that the Church's

greatest enemies are those of her own household, and that if she had no others, she could afford to laugh at the "Liberation Society" if it were thrice as strong. Of course I do not like to be called names, or have unworthy motives imputed to me; but no large-hearted and high-minded man indulges in this sort of attack, and I am not afraid of you, Mr. Wilkinson."

From that moment we understood one another: he was to be the Vicar of Brook, a decided and conscientious Episcopalian; and I was to be the Independent Minister of the adjoining town, and an advocate of the "Liberation Society."

On returning the Vicar's call, strange to say, I found him with a copy of the "Liberator." Before he had spoken many words, he said "Well, Mr. Wilkinson, I have just been reading some warning notes. We are told, amongst other things, by this affectionate friend, that we must begin to put our house in order."

"And when that is done, Sir, we shall have to do likewise, or the concluding chapter of our history will very soon be written."

"What do you mean, Mr. Wilkinson?"

"Why, this, Sir, that on the day that the Church is free, the real start in the race will begin."

"You think we have a chance, then?" he said.

"I am certain that your chances," I replied, "will be increased twenty fold. From the Plymouth Brethren and Bible Christians upwards, there is not a sect but dreams the modest dream of being the elect Church of

the future. But which of them could compete with a reformed Dis-established Church, if the reformations were made in the spirit of the age? Your alliance with the State, in place of being the rock on which you rest, is nothing so much as your weakness. How does it come to pass that, with all your fabulous wealth, your "giving" is so miserably insignificant? Not because Dissenters are more generous than Churchmen, but because Dissenters have been thrown upon their own resources, and Churchmen have become pauperised."

"It will at least be a bad day for the nation, Mr. Wilkinson, when she is left without a State Church."

"On the contrary," I replied. "The nation must gain just because the Church gains. For when the State lets go the Church, the Church will let go not a few of her traditions and customs. What chance would incapable men have of buying livings, or even holding pulpits as they do now? The want of the nation for the pulpits is preachers and hard workers. When livings are bought and sold to the highest bidder, the pulpits of a noble Church held by men who would fail to secure a livelihood in any other profession, and the Liturgy read by those who read it without sympathy and devotion, the loss of spiritual life and power to the Church and to the nation, cannot be estimated. Why, Sir, with such rare opportunities and weapons; with such an array of scholars; with an old church in almost every village and hamlet, around which the rich and the poor have buried their dead, and into which with

aching hearts they have entered for consolation on a Sabbath morning; with a hold upon the aristocracy and the peasantry which is even yet traditional; with a history which mingles with the greatest pages of the national history; with ministers located almost wherever there is a group of men; Episcopacy ought by this time to have entwined itself around the heart of the people, and brought the great bulk of the nation completely within its pale; but what is the fact? Episcopacy has been losing its hold on the people for generations, and as long as she wears the fetters of the State she is destined to do so. Let her occupy her high vantage ground, free with the freedom wherewith the great Head of the Church will bless her when He alone is her Head, and there is absolutely nothing which she may not accomplish for the land. England is not godly because there is an Act of Parliament which links Church with State. This may be the form of godliness, but it is not the power. When Episcopacy has bowed the knee of the State to Him whose Cross is the symbol of our glorious faith, then the nation shall be godly. This she has yet to do."

"But what are you leaving for the Independents, Mr. Wilkinson?"

"Well, Sir, I freely own that the Church might be so reformed as to embody much of what is distinctive in Independency. Most assuredly by gaining religious equality, we should lose some of the most attractive items of our programme. Whatever strength belongs

to us by reason of our separation from the State could belong to us no more. This has been one of the very roots upon which we have grown. Our preaching has been another great source of our progress; but what would there be to hinder Episcopacy raising a race of preachers altogether unexcelled?"

"You don't think that Independency would become amalgamated with Episcopacy, do you, Mr. Wilkinson?"

"Perhaps never altogether; but I do think that the introduction of a Liturgy into many of our Independent churches, and the use of the manuscript by so many of our ministers, are to a very large degree educating the people for Episcopacy, and leaving them very little choice in Independency. If it simply came to be a matter of deciding between churchwardens and deacons, there would be six of one and half a dozen of the other; and if Independents do not cease their internal quarrelings, a Bishop would come to be regarded as no great obstacle. With the Dis-establishment and Dis-endowment of the Church, the Prayer-book would be altered, and other hindrances would be removed."

"But you remind me, Mr. Wilkinson, that instead of Episcopacy being one great comprehensive and glorious Church, it would be split up into miserable fragments. Our connection with the State and with the Prayer-book holds us together. Let there be, in either respect, the slightest alteration, and first of all we should be sundered into three or four divisions, and before long into five or six times as many. Not only should we

have Evangelicals, Ritualists, broad Churchmen, and strong Churchmen, but of each of these sections we should have various subdivisions. There is not one of our divisions but would become more fertile than Methodism itself in multiplying."

"But is it not better, sir, that there should be so many sects, and that the Church should be free? Such an external union as now exists is surely not worth having. Besides, you are virtually sanctioning, and endorsing creeds and opinions to which you have the strongest objection."

"It is known only too well, I think, that we by no means endorse and sanction each others opinions. It could not be known better under any circumstances, and the multiplication of sects I hold to be an intolerable evil. Amongst other things it enfeebles Christianity. Instead of our holy religion presenting an imposing front to the world, it is broken up into divisions which are preying upon each other, as though each other's bitterest enemies. Every new sect increases the strife of the churches. We do not want more sects, the very name is becoming the curse of the land."

"But what has helped to breed sects so much, sir, as the Establishment? What made Independency? Out of what sprang Methodism? Besides, my opinion is, that whenever Episcopacy is Dis-established and Dis-endowed, Ritualism will go to its own place. When it has no longer either the prestige or the pay of the State, what will there be to keep it? Its ministers are

ripe for every superstition and idolatry practised in the Church of Rome. Their only complaint is that they cannot 'do as Rome does.' The Unitarians almost in a body would amalgamate with a section of the Broad Churchmen. It is not impossible that the Evangelicals would be recruited by vast numbers from the Wesleyan Methodists, whose original work of evangelisation is now taken up by the Primitive Methodists, for through all their history they have never sought to separate themselves very widely from Episcopacy. Large numbers from other denominations would join them. The power of the Parish Church on our wealthier families is magical. The precise result, I own, it is impossible to foretell, but we do know that whether sects be multiplied, or whether they be decreased, whether Independency will gain or lose, is not the great question to be considered, but what is right and what God demands. But I find, sir, the right thing for me to be doing at present is going home."

I had spoken very plainly, and often more warmly than the words may indicate, but I felt quite certain that I should not be misunderstood, and I was not, for such outspoken and friendly intercourse we maintained to the last. When his father-in-law came to the Vicarage, he came to chapel once a day; and when we needed a chairman for the Tract-society, or any kindred institution, the Vicar of Brook was always willing to help. On these occasions, I confess, however, that it was almost too bad to ask for his services, for he knew

better than we could tell him, that speaking for five minutes extemporaneously was an intolerable pain to him. To see this tall, handsome, gentlemanly looking man stand up, and to know that he was a scholar of whom his college was proud, and then to hear him flounder and stammer in telling us that he was glad to see us, and ending a speech of about three minutes with something like the end of a Collect, was simply distressing. It was like a giant struggling to perform the feat possible to a dwarf, for how many pigmies for fifty or sixty minutes bring down the cheers of the assembly ever and anon! Why should not the Vicar of Brook? If he had been at a Dissenting College, he might have been less of a scholar, but he would have been a better speaker. Being on the platform at all, indeed, seemed to be utterly out of his line. How well I remember him thanking his friends for the enthusiastic manner in which they had drunk his health, when returning thanks for the vote which had been accorded him for occupying the chair at the annual meeting of the Tract Society!

The Vicar of Brook was by no means highly intellectual, and, perhaps, was wanting in distinctness and definiteness of character. What the doctrines were which he preached I never knew, and know not to this day. Very often have I sought to elicit his opinions, as I felt the agitation of controversy surging in my own mind, but always in vain. If he was not a theologian, neither was he a partisan. He neither

identified himself with the "John Bull," the "Spectator," nor the "Record," and I was accustomed to read all three myself much more than he was. He was equally free from all extremes of practices. No one ever saw him with a red coat on and a whip in his hand, and they were quite as unlikely to see him at a revival meeting attacking sinners on the state of their souls. The teetotallers would as soon have thought of asking Buxton or Hanbury to preside at their meetings as the Vicar, but his life could vindicate itself before any tribunal. His great scholarship and thorough gentlemanliness made all men regard him with respect, and there were few who would not have voted him into a Bishopric, even if they had been disposed to vote him out of the Vicarage.

The Vicar of the town in which I resided, belonged to a decidedly different class of men. He was a hearty, genial, showy Irishman, and a strongly pronounced Protestant of the Evangelical School. If any man dared to preach any other gospel than his, he withered beneath the vicar's anathema. "War to the knife with the Rationalists!" he exclaimed, when the Essays and Reviews began to make such a noise, and as the people without an exception made a point of endorsing his every statement, the Essays and Reviews were henceforth looked out for as a kind of antediluvian monster for whose sacrifice the Church was calling out. Although upon the whole a decidedly inferior man to the Vicar of Brook, he was far more popular, and as he

was a bachelor, he was put in jeopardy by all the wealth, fashion, and beauty of the neighbourhood. When he gave his celebrated course of sermons on Solomon's Song, the church, if not the kingdom of heaven, suffered violence, and the violent who took it by storm, were the women.

I had to do with him as a dissenter, and although he was far less likely to embrace me than some member of his congregation, he was far from being hostile. He assumed that we had an existence, that we were neither so loathsome as the leprosy, nor so pestilential as the plague, and never classed us with beer-houses and infidels. It was evidently part of his creed, however, that our existence was a grievous wrong to the mother church, that we owed it to her tolerance that we could sit beneath our own fig tree, and that on all public occasions we ought to feel considerably thankful in being second. He was much better though than his creed, and it was only necessary to make an allowance for the importance of his congregation and position, to work with him quite harmoniously, and without the loss of any self-respect. It does one no harm to give a sugar-plum now and then, and by giving one occasionally to the Vicar, you could work miracles with him.

In time I became acquainted with all the clergy in the town, and—with the exception of the incumbent of St. John's, who disagreed with his wife as well as his brethren; brought his dinner to the vestry to be ready for the Sabbath school, but preached such vivid sermons

on the leprosy and kindred topics, that he often fairly took away the appetites of not a few of his refined hearers; attended the day school as devoutly as the Sunday school, in one of which places there was a rupture and turn-out four times a-year; and every few weeks, by a solemn mistake, "churched" an innocent maiden, whom he had mistaken whilst waiting for the matron who requested the services of the incumbent—I worked quite comfortably with them. At first the Curate of the parish church was disposed to be very large, and regard me quite scornfully; but when he saw the courtesy and grace shown me so markedly by his Vicar, he utterly collapsed and was henceforth characterised by the "umbleness" of Uriah Heap.

Since these days I have been almost entirely cut off from the clergy, and I sincerely regret it. As a class they are somewhat arrogant, but so in the same position would Dissenting ministers be. The greater proportion of them are gentlemen, and men of education. Perhaps the greatest mistake they make is in attempting to look down on Nonconforming ministers as an inferior class, for they are often looking down on their equals, and sometimes on their superiors. Many of them assume that to be a "Clergyman" is to be separated from a "Minister" by a superiority almost boundless; they forget that the minister has chosen his Nonconformity, and is not exiled to it; indeed, that if he asked for ordination there are few Bishops who would not really be anxious to give it; whilst, on the other

hand, the great bulk of clergymen would be almost unable to obtain their daily bread in the Nonconformist churches.

The Vicar of the town in which I now reside belongs to the strong Church. If he dared, it is said, he would be somewhat High Church, but as he dare not he is nothing in particular, save the incarnate principle of Church and State. If the Church were a client, and he its lawyer, or the Church an estate and he its bailiff, he would be the right man in the right place. Dissenters are his horror. He can fraternise with a Catholic Priest, and take wine with an Officer, but hates Dissenting ministers with a perfect hatred. There is only one chance of conciliating him, namely, being false to your convictions, and a traitor to your denomination. On coming to the town an indirect message was brought to me to the effect that the Vicar would be happy to work with me if I absented myself from the Liberation Society meetings, took no part in politics, and sought in no way the injury of the Church. I have always declared, and that with the greatest sincerity and honesty, that I would not, even if I could, injure the Church in any manner whatever; but that gladly would I do anything in my power to help her truest interests, because, in my heart, I believe that the Lord and the nation have need of her, and that she has yet the brightest pages of her history to write! This is not enough for the Vicar of whom I now speak. I had been in the town but a few months, when I found him

selling the furniture of the poor because they would not pay dues which, in their consciences, were not dues. How could I absent myself from the platform of the Liberation Society? The Vicar was wounding the Head of the Church, and alienating the people from her, whilst the Liberation Society was seeking to take from him the power which he was so awfully abusing. When the elections in due course came round, I found that no one was more active than the Vicar; that he was the very soul of the Conservative Committee; that he preached politics from the pulpit, and that he denounced Liberalism and Dissent as an unholy alliance for the destruction of both Church and State. How could I give a silent vote? Clergymen of this stamp are the greatest enemies that the Church has. In the transgressions which I have enumerated, most of the Nonconformist ministers took share, and there, it would be thought, the matter ended, but these were sins in the Vicar's eyes which merited the heaviest punishment. If the power had been his to send us off, two by two, to Smithfield, I have no doubt that most of us would have been "dust to dust" and "ashes to ashes," and resting in neither "sure" nor "certain hope of eternal life," whilst our churches would have been left without one stone upon another. As the Vicar could not bring about such a result, he did what he could, and that was to split up the Auxiliary of the Bible Society, and refuse to meet us upon its broad and Catholic platform, or in any other way or manner what-

ever. We are branded as "political Dissenters," as "enemies of the Royal Family," as "revolutionary in our tendencies," "vulgar in our manners," and never happy except when we are "law-breakers." Such is the amiable relation of Church and Dissent with us! But I owe it to the Vicar to say that withal I believe him to be honest, holding Dissent to be schism, and schism an awful sin.

Before concluding this chapter, I ought to state that the recent election of a large-hearted Bishop to the diocese has already borne fruit in Langton, and promises to bear it in larger abundance, which will not only produce a better feeling between Episcopalians and Nonconformists, but will prove for the glory and progress of the religion of "peace and good will" to men, which both should seek to promote.

CHAPTER VII.

LOSS OF FAITH.

THE only great trial through which I passed, in this my first pastorate, was one in which my people shewed me the tenderest sympathy. I lost my faith, not only in Christianity, but in the very foundations of religion; in the existence of God, the soul, and a future. To have brought about so strange and unexpected a result, causes must have been operating for some time. Whatever they may have been, health was not one. How subtle is the connection between body and soul, all doctors and ministers soon discover. A weakly body is often the greatest tyrant by which we can be oppressed, and nothing in turn can so much prey upon it, and grind it down to the grave as a disordered mind. My prescriptions in cases of spiritual weakness, for the loss of God's presence, and for an utter despair of forgiveness, had on more than one occasion included the bright sunshine, change of air and scene, and other matters which would certainly have been suggested by a doctor; whilst on the other hand doctors had more than once asked me to call and see patients, telling me that I could do much more good than they. But although

my own health had never been what most would term robust, it had never been better than for some years past. Nor was depression of mind the cause. One disease induces another, and a mind oppressed by some great anxiety or fear is easily susceptible of such a state as that which overtook me. Perhaps there is no such fertile spoil for spiritual doubt as despondency, and despondency is often enough induced by such a trifle as an adverse turn in the tide of fortune. If we allow ourselves to become the creatures of circumstance, and to be over-awed and engrossed by the loss of what is merely temporal and earthly, it is very easy to lose even God and heaven. If the storms of life do not drive us beneath the shelter of the everlasting wings where light, rest, and help await us, they are very likely to drive us about like the ship in which Paul was sailing, at the mercy of winds and waves, without sun, moon, or stars for days and nights, leaving us at last utterly wrecked. But there was nothing in my circumstances to weigh a heavy load upon my mind; they had never seemed more propitious. Hope whispered to me, bright visions beckoned me, great aspirations filled me. And there was nothing in my natural temperament to explain it. There has ever been excess of the sanguine in it. I never gave up a battle whilst there was yet a chance. It is no slight difficulty that can appal me. If there happens to be a bright side to things I am certain to see it, and hence morbidness will not account for the "loss of faith."

When I say that I lost my faith in what had once been the rock on which I stood, I fully express myself. I never utterly disbelieved, and ignored the fundamental facts of our religion, but I could not believe with heart and soul, nay, could not believe in any sense. My position was not so much positive unbelief, as the negation of belief. If I never concluded that God was a myth, and heaven but a dream, I feared that this was so, and the fear was upon me night and day, with an agony which I cannot describe. It haunted me wherever I went, turning day into night, sweetness into bitterness. For the first time I began to pray with strong cryings and tears. If there was a God, I besought and entreated that he would make himself seen and felt to my mind; that He would hear me for the sake of the unceasing torment with which I was distressed; that He would make His works praise Him, and what I had believed to be His word, a living voice. My own prayers seemed to mock me. My life became a burden, and yet I shuddered to die, for I recoiled from annihilation as from something horrible, and to feel that all the dead were dead to me for ever increased the pain. I had lost my father and mother a dozen years before, but for the first time I seemed to feel how awful had been the separation. Hitherto I had thought of them living, waiting for me in some better home, perhaps watching me, even ministering to me at times, and the thought brightened my life; but now I dared not think of them, for to think of them buried out of

my sight for ever and for ever was too appalling. Other graves which had been bridged by radiant hopes and sweetest expectations, yawned and widened till all they suggested was the separation and eternal destruction of whatever had been loved. For them, as well as for myself, I wept bitter tears, and groaned with groanings which cannot be uttered. It had been better for them to have lived, even amid conflict, toil, and sadness than perish in such untimely death. I am not exaggerating what I felt when I say, that if all the world had been mine, and in exchange for it I could have had faith in God's existence, I would not have hesitated for a moment in surrendering all the gold, and fame, and power that millionaires, kings, authors, and statesmen possess. My dearest anticipations, my highest ambitions for this life I could have renounced gladly, if I could only have felt that there was a God above me, and a future before me. To find faith, how greedily did I devour books, and seek the conversation of great and devout men, and to what little purpose!

It seemed to me that those who could believe that there was a living, loving God above them, around them, and beneath them; a Christ to whom they could come, with all the burden and stain of guilt, in the trust and love of forgiven and hoping men; and a future where they could meet again with all the noble and tender-hearted friends and companions of life's journey, ought to feel supremely blest, even if poverty and affliction were their heritage, from the cradle to

the grave. I almost envied the superstition and credulity with which I came in contact.

Late one evening I was called to see a poor dying woman. I went again the next night, but found her dead. "Yes, Sir," said one of the women in the house, "her son what was drowned last autumn appeared to her as soon as you was gone, and told her that he would come for her to-day, at one o'clock. And she died at one o'clock exactly." My face must have expressed what my mind was feeling, for she went on: "Perhaps, Sir, you don't believe in appearances, but I do, because I have seen one. I lost my husband when I was quite young. One night as I sat alone crying, as I often did, I looked up, and if ever I saw mortal, I saw him. There was no mistake. I wasn't frightened, and I spoke. He opened his mouth, though he never answered me, and as he lifted his hand and pointed up, he seemed to me to be saying, 'We are going to meet again, Mary,' and he disappeared all of a minute, and it quite eased my mind, Sir, about him." A few days after, an old acquaintance was staying with me, a man of no little experience and culture. Our conversation had naturally led up to spiritualism, as in my then state of mind, was very likely. We both agreed in voting it a great farce. "But I am very far," he said, "from being a materialist, Wilkinson, and it may be that you will think me as mad as the spiritualists, when I tell you that I have seen the dead as distinctly as I have the living. As you know, I lost my mother

when a child, and my father died broken-hearted after his terrible losses, and in consequence of the sudden collapse, and the reduced circumstances in which we were left, I went out to Australia to seek my fortune. We left the dock about eleven o'clock on a June night; when it was quite light enough to distinguish all who were leave-taking and hurrying to and fro. I had not been on board above a minute, and was just experiencing that desolation which an almost friendless man who has many memories and associations binding him to the past is likely to feel at such a crisis of his life, when I saw a face and form which made the very blood in my veins stand still. It was my father. I stood for a moment paralysed, and then went up to him, when he retired from me and gradually disappeared in the distance, beckoning me after him. I cannot describe what I felt, and of course I could not even whisper it to any one on board. The vision filled my thoughts day and night with wonder, and many a time did I pace the deck at midnight, straining my eyes and praying to see again what I had seen. The explanation seemed given to that beckoning back, not only by a storm in which many a ship went down, but in the hardships, perils, adversities, and illnesses through which I passed, month after month and year after year. Once I was gradually getting together a bit of gold, when my hut was broken into, my treasure plundered, and after a desperate resistance I was left as much dead as alive. That is only one of many such strange adventures of a

strange life for ten years. Towards the close of that time, I was lying down one night beside the log fire, in an isolated hut, in which I was living all alone, thinking over the many hardships and incidents I had passed through, and all for nothing, when I heard my name as plainly as it was ever pronounced, and in a voice I could not mistake. I started up just in time to see my father pointing towards the west. I shouted with a cry of entreaty, but he had gone before the words had left my lips. The next morning I started westward, and here I am to night, Wilkinson, a rich man, because I believed the pointing of that hand." For these, and similar beliefs, I of course had my own explanations, and was if anything more disposed to be unbelieving.

All the arguments upon which I had been accustomed to rely, and which I had set forth so confidently, appeared to me almost valueless. I set myself to conceive God's existence, and when I groped after Him I was bewildered by my own strivings. Buddha and Confucius saw no need of a Creator, and therefore He is clearly not the necessity of all great and unbiased minds. If savages and half-civilized peoples believe in the existence of a Deity, neither ancient nor modern philosophy appears to tend to such belief. Even men like Baden Powell own that the Creation is no proof of a personal God, whilst Hume, Mill, and Comte, in their reticence and uncertainties, are simply representatives of very much of the culture, science, and philosophy of the age. If the eternity of matter involves

mystery, so does the eternity of God. The nebulæ hypothesis is far from being exploded, and the proof of the development theory is becoming perfectly startling. If there is a God, whence came the foul monsters and loathsome reptiles which have been and are part of the creation? What can explain the abounding triumphs of unrighteousness, and the utter moral confusion around? Above all, what was the origin of the monster of iniquity? If God is an explanation of very much, He is also a sore perplexity. Such, in brief, were some of my thinkings about the Deity.

And very much as follows was a summary of the conflicting reasonings that chased each other in my mind upon the possibility of another life. We long for it, but do we not long for much that only mocks and cheats us? The better half of our expectations even in this world utterly perish. The pagan and heathen world have to a large extent shared the hope of another life, but are we to go to the pagan and heathen world for our beliefs? They believed that God could be propitiated by human blood; are they to confirm our cravings for another life? The belief is not essential to man's nature. "Life," exclaimed Buddha, "is like the spark produced by wood, it is lighted and is extinguished, we know not whence it came or whither it goes." Such were the first thoughts of this great man; and something like a belief in sheer annihilation, was the result of his thought and contemplation, and for two thousand years his belief has swayed the minds

of hundreds of millions of Buddhists. Plato wrote arguments to prove the immortality of the soul, but did not Socrates suggest as much doubt as hope? Materialism was the essence of some of the Greek philosophies, and its advocates are amongst some of the greatest men of the present age. It is true that the mass of people in the civilised nations share a faith common with the savage tribes in another life, but does not this, to a great extent, arise from the fact that it is assumed, taught them from their earliest days, and propounded to them amid the solemnities of the sanctuary on the Sabbath? If the pulpits of Christendom were occupied for fifty years by materialists, or even by the scientific men who fairly and honestly stated the discoveries and laws of anatomy, physiology, psychology, and matter generally, would they not have almost converted the nation to materialism? We assume that thought is an attribute of soul, but what proof have we? To say that matter is incapable of such a result is begging the question. If man alone of all created works thinks and reasons, even the reptiles are capable of something so suggestive of both, that to claim a soul for man and not for them, is much more like theology than fair reasoning. Old age with its loss of memory and capacity for consecutive reasoning is more strongly suggestive of materialism than Christianity. If for man as man there is a future, some very startling facts are involved, especially when taken in connection with Christianity. How few of the race are carrying

about in them the germs of heaven, the life of Jesus! What, then, is to be the state of the great mass, the millions? Are they simply born for perdition? Is the better part of the future land to be prisons, and the home of the depraved, and the miserable? Are all the worst features of this world for ever to stain and blot the next? It seems easier to believe that there is no heaven, than a hell so vast, so capacious!

But there was the testimony of Christ, and about that I became sceptical, too. The very wonderfulness of His life made it incredible. The object of His mission, taken in connection with the result, increased it: He came to "seek and to save" a world where even after 1900 years the story of His life is far from being universally known, and where it is known, how few believe it with that faith which is the only faith unto salvation! But how could God be born of a woman? It seemed easier to believe that Mary imposed upon the world, than that she conceived under the shadow of the Holy Ghost. The miracles were altogether unaccountable by law, and it was as possible to believe that the Apostles in after days were deceived by the illusion of time, and the law by which we exaggerate the deeds of the dead, as that anything so startling, so prodigious occurred. The disciples give no evidence that they were impostors; but why might they not be deceived? Buddha, Confucius, and a multitude whom no man can number among the Greeks and Romans, have had extraordinary feats attributed to them after the grave

has closed upon them. The time of Christ's alleged life was a period in the world's history, when it was both likely to deify a great man, and at the same time for the transfiguration to be saved from those self-evident incongruities which characterised early mythology, and which still characterises it amid half-civilized peoples. There had been extraordinary men in connection with science, art, poetry, literature, and law; why may there not have been in connection with religion, and why may not that one have been Jesus of Nazareth? This idea gained strength, taken in connection with the people from whom He sprang, for the gift of the Hebrews was the genius of religion, just as art belonged to the Greeks, and the war-like spirit to the Romans. Their Jehovah was capricious and revengeful, but how infinitely greater and nobler than the highest conceptions formed of Him by the Egyptians, Phœnicians, or Persians! If they chiefly placed the reward of virtue in temporal prosperity and long life, rather than in the soul's development, their religion as compared to all others was as light to darkness. Was it not likely that Jesus should spring from such a people? And was it not likely that His disciples, in memory of His life, and in reading over the Hebrew prophecies of their kings and deliverers would see the fulfilment of all in their dead Master? It is true that for a time they believed that He had died as a malefactor; but the natural reaction upon their depression would be the biographies. Very much more seemed to be in

harmony with such thinking. For instance, if our Lord sanctioned the belief that He was the Son of God, did he not sanction the belief that He was neither God nor perfect, when He declared to the young man, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God."

For some time past my doubts and fears had shaped my sermons, but as they continued supreme and unabated, I determined to let my deacons know frankly and fully. For this purpose I called them together, and as this was something quite unusual, there was curiosity written on every face. Without keeping them in any suspense, I at once explained my exact state, adding that it had not left me, or even abated, and that so I felt bound not only to let them know, but to offer them my resignation. For a moment there was silence, and so I continued: "I remember, gentlemen, when all these things were items in my creed which I could not have doubted. My marvel was that the Gospel failed to commend itself to any man. When I preached, it was at least with sincerity. It was often the joy of my own heart, and I sometimes yearned with a great longing, that it might have greater triumphs in your midst. I feel like a man utterly beggared and bankrupt, robbed of all I prized, and, in addition, reft even of the hope of getting it back. Occupying the pulpit has ever been the crown of my ambition, but what right have I to occupy a place which belongs only to those, who, not only believe that God was mani-

fest in the flesh, but are devoted to His service with a love so passionate that neither life nor death can tear them from it?"

"You must not think of leaving us," spoke out my acting deacon, "much less of retiring from the ministry. This state will not last; we are all subject to changes and diseases."

"You are only in the dark valley and shadow of death," said my oldest deacon. "I have been there myself: not in the same way, yet in another which makes me quite understand it. For twelve years I believed that I was lost: nothing and nobody could persuade me otherwise. If it had not been that I felt sure that Hell itself was waiting for me, I would have laid violent hands on my life. Many a time Bunyan's picture of the 'Valley and shadow of death,' with the flitting to and fro of fiends, the leaping upward of the fire, and the very atmosphere full of blasphemies, was as real to me as this room is. I do feel for you, Sir; you must visit some of your poor people, especially the good old men and women who love Jesus."

"Yes," said Mr. Gutridge, "and you must go away for a change, Sir. No one need know why, for we cannot expect your condition to be thoroughly understood by the people. It will be time enough for you to talk of leaving us after months. I am certain you never will, Sir; you are honest in your doubts, and you are earnest for the faith, and I could as soon believe that there was neither God nor future myself,

as that honest earnestness should seek and never find."

Mr. Morley said, "We are all subject to doubts and fears, Mr. Wilkinson; and as you are only a man of passions like to ourselves, you are not to be free from them. Depend upon it, Sir, God has some great work for you to do, and He is preparing you to understand it, to sympathise with it, and serve Him in it better than you could without such discipline."

It was ultimately arranged that Mr. Gutridge's proposal should be adopted, and that I should go away for a few weeks.

The only other person to whom I communicated the state of my mind was Mrs. Hutchison. "My dear friend," she said, "a minister's life is vicarious; for the sake of others he has to suffer, and I doubt little but that you are passing through this agony of doubt for the sake of men and women who will need greater tenderness of treatment than a man who had never experienced such sorrowful darkness could offer to them. There is something also in the age in which we are living to be taken into account. You at once share and illustrate its spirit; it is torn, rent, and tormented with more honest doubt than any age which has gone before it. It is a transition period. We are passing through the pains of separation, leaving for ever much that our fathers loved and trusted. Something of the trouble is experienced by all who think or read, and to the leaders of thought the grief must be

intense. Whilst bearing the burden do not forget this: Jesus Himself lost the presence of God, and cried out in a great agony, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' But God came back to Him, and Jesus commended His spirit to the hands of a Father who was nearer than the cross and closer than the grave. There was not one of the disciples but lost faith in the Master, but He came back from the dead to give them assurance, and they became the Evangelists and Apostles who have led the march of Christianity. Rest in God, my friend, and wait patiently for Him. He may let doubt have its own wild way for many days yet, but all its sadness shall be turned into the song of confidence. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'"

The doubts were far from gone when I left home, but it was a relief to have made them known, and the tender sympathy which I had experienced was quite soothing and refreshing. My weeks of absence were spent in reading the books which represented the sceptical spirit of Germany, France, and England; books of this class having quite a fascination for me. Although I was struggling against the spirit which they incarnated, they drew me to them as by a mystic spell. Strange to say, and yet perhaps not at all strange, these books provided the very remedy which began the cure. If I had found difficulty in accepting the Christ of the Evangelists, I found that my difficulties would be increased in accepting the Christ of Strauss, or

Theodore Parker, or Bauer, or Voltaire. The boundlessness of their assumptions, and the feebleness of their explanations when dealing with the miracles, and especially with the life of Jesus, gained upon me daily. Often I came upon a theory which made me marvel, that men who were bowing their knees to the Goddess Reason could so utterly outrage her; and just as such theories made me smile, so many insinuations on the uprightness of Jesus made me resent them, and almost recoil with a shudder. Another cause was working along with this, and as I can now see, supplementing and giving power to it. On the Sabbath days I heard sermons, some of which bore their fruit at once. As the custom of ministers often is when away from home, I wore a coloured tie and went quietly to worship, irrespective of denomination. A very beautiful but simple sermon, in a Wesleyan Methodist chapel, preached by one of the Circuit ministers, on the text "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," deeply moved me. It was not an argumentative sermon, indeed it not only assumed all that is supernatural, but what is distinctive in Christian theology; and yet this sermon not only carried my heart along with it, but bowed my understanding before the sublimity and tenderness of its revelations. As I returned home my musings were much to this effect: "Yes, there can be no doubt that man is perishing. If sin does anything, it corrupts and poisons

man's nature. There can be as little question that whosoever believeth in Christ liveth in Him, and that such a life alone is worthy of being called life. But where it exists, is it not the pledge even of heaven itself? The story of Christ's life and death for men gets a hold on human nature, such as nothing ever has done, or can do. That simple sermon not only melted my whole nature, but for a time compelled my faith. To bring about a result so high was surely worthy of the highest and greatest Being in the universe. And how divine is this assumption of the Father's love! So spontaneous, so boundless, so self-sacrificing, it loudly bespeaks God, almost demands Him! If it is not true it ought to be; for surely it is as honouring to the Deity and to His Son as it is tender and gracious to the world which is plunging to its own destruction!

Thus, step by step, did I come back to the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. The Gospel proved its own witness. Henceforth I have always believed that natural theology is not so much the basis of Christian theology as the latter is of the former.

One of the first results of this experience was a deep and earnest searching of heart. How merely professional seemed all my past ministerial life! How utterly unworthy! How heartless! For a time what I had endured seemed a judgment for neglected duty and ministerial deficiency; then it assumed the aspect of loving chastening, and this brought as much sweetness

as the other had sadness; at last I could almost hear the Master's voice calling me to work, and if there had been need to bear the standard of the cross where only tribulation and cruel death awaited, I think I could have borne it glorying.

Another result was tenderness towards all the doubting. Hard or harsh towards them, I could not feel. For men like George Holyoake my heart yearned. For a time I knew something of what the Apostle meant, when his heart's desire and prayer to God was that Israel might be saved; when he travailed in birth that Christ might be formed in their hearts; and when he wished himself accursed for his brethren's sake. When now I hear anathemas pronounced on those who have another creed, my flesh almost creeps. If the Lord had not been as gentle and forbearing towards me as He had been to the sceptical disciple, to whom He not only showed Himself, but gave permission for His very wounds to be touched, I must have been groping my way in quest of Him to this day even, if not denying Him; and often as this thought overtakes me, sympathy for those who are yet in the gall of bitterness takes full possession of me.

A third result was stronger faith in what I henceforth believed. The being of God became to me a Rock, another life as real as the life that now is, and Jesus Christ the manifested God to man.

CHAPTER VIII.

FAREWELL.

THE experience described in the last chapter was very terrible, but the spoil was worth the battle, the cleansing worth the scorching; for no period of my life had proved productive of greater spiritual results. I had been "born again" and the second conversion was deeper and greater than the first. The earliest sign of my return to "the faith" was an earnest examination of the various doctrines which underlay my teaching. At what point precisely I began to assume the great fundamental facts of religion, and to inspect the dogmas of the Church I cannot tell, but the latter lasted for a considerable period; and, though the change was by no means from an Evangelical faith to a Rationalistic creed, I fear that some good men would have considered that it was none for the better. For instance, my theory of the Atonement went utterly, and although since then I have read Campbell McLeod's, Bushnell's, Kingsley's, and fifty other theories, I have never adopted one. But the great fact of an Atonement having been made in Christ's

death, I believe with an intensified belief, and preach with an intensified joy. So far from this being a retrogade step, I simply returned to the faith of the early Church, for certainly the Apostles and Fathers who dwelt upon the fact never attempted to explain it. But this is no place for a confession of faith.

Henceforth my life flowed on smoothly and pleasantly, till towards the close of the fourth year of my pastorate, when the necessity of health demanded a change of climate. What was to be done to secure another church? I could not preach a sermon, "publish it by request," and circulate it among the vacant churches; I could not send a composition to one of the religious papers along with a notice of my intended resignation, so that deacons who were on the look out might see the manner of my doctrine, method, and style, and have no doubt in the world that this was an advertisement; I could not ask my people to pass a long resolution about their regret at the decision to which I had come, together with a high flown tribute to my unblemished character and great abilities, and then send it to the "Religious Intelligence." All this is puffing worthy of a grocer's shop-window, or a theatrical entertainment, but quite beyond my reach. And so I wrote quietly to two ministerial brethren of some distinction, who were also personal friends, suggesting to them two or three places.

I now for the first time discovered the tremendous run there is upon vacant pulpits. One of the gentlemen

to whom I wrote replied, "You have no idea of the pressure brought to bear on these places. Not one of them has less than a hundred names before it, including not a few that would quite astonish you, and one or two who are considered to be as stationary as the sun itself." These churches I soon found were not exceptions. A church has only to become vacant, and whatever may have been its character, or whatever may be its income, it is literally stormed by applicants. This is a fact which needs to be looked at. The influence upon the churches is well known. One result is, that, when vacant, they are fastidious beyond belief. One candidate being nearly forty is much too old, and not energetic enough for the young people; and another, being scarcely more than thirty, is far too young and inexperienced. A third will never do because he has yellow hair; a fourth, because to the complete satisfaction of some rising grocer who has boarding-school daughters, and at whose house he has stayed over the Sunday, he has proved that "he is no gentleman, or he could not have taken mustard to mutton;" a fifth, because his voice has too much of a growl in it; and a sixth, because "he doesn't give out the hymns nicely." This list might be extended *ad infinitum*. A second result, but closely associated with the first is, that it is now no rare occurrence for a church to remain vacant for two or three years, just long enough to become completely Athenianised, not in refinement so much as in desiring to hear "some new

thing," and for one or two officious persons to have got the whole working of the church into their hands, who henceforth cling with all the tenacity of their officialism to every prerogative of seat-holder, member, deacon, treasurer, secretary, week-night lecturer, and not a little else beside. That churches can remain vacant so long, and that with rare exceptions the pulpits can be supplied by ministers who are "moveable," strongly bears out what I have stated, that there is something that needs to be looked at. It will no doubt be said in reply, that if a Vicarage is untenanted the heart of every Curate for miles, if not for counties round, is in a state of palpitation; and if a Bishopric is vacant, there is scarcely a clergyman of importance but is in suspense too great to wait for the postman's knock, to sleep out the night, or partake of daily food, and that not rarely the agonies of disappointment bring on mortal dissolution. But we have to look at our own evils, and to supply the cure. The cure depends upon the cause.

For various reasons there must always be ministers seeking a change, under any circumstances. Great men are often in places quite unworthy of them, and if water will seek its own level, we cannot wonder if they do. Health necessitates and justifies it too, for the climate which may be the cause of one man's debility and unfitness for his work, may be the condition of another's strength and life.

There can be as little doubt that there are ministers

who have said all that they have to say when the first four Sabbaths are over. You could not get a fresh or vigorous sermon once a month out of them for love or money. They are no doubt sublimely oblivious of such a trifle, but it can scarcely be surprising if the people remember it once a week at least. It may have quite escaped such an one that the sermon on "Thou art a God that hidest thyself," is the same as that preached a month ago on "Clouds and darkness are round about Him," and that the discourse on "Looking unto Jesus," was an adaptation of "The brazen serpent," preached scarcely so long ago, but the children who have their "tasks to get off" do not always forget, if the mammas do. The most forbearing congregation cannot sacrifice itself to perpetual martyrdom, and they may be excused for even suggesting to their pastor a farewell "Testimonial." These brethren are often candidates. Then there are others who have no greater capacities for originating thought than the last, but a decided ambition to do their best, and work for material as long as it is forthcoming. They will not be told that they cannot hold out any longer, but they know it, and begin to prepare for the change as solemnly and as voluntarily as the man to whom death is inevitable. These brethren are remarkable for long life, and they are open to a call as long as life lasts. The list, however, is swelled by ministers who are absolutely starving, and none the less because they have £150 or £200 a year, or who have in the church, in the shape of

an office-bearer, a messenger from Satan to buffet them, the said messenger buffeting much on Sunday, more on Monday, and most of all at the prayer-meeting in praying for "the Pastor."

The cure then belongs, in part, to the ministers, who recommend candidates for college, and the committees who examine; in part, to the churches who ought to see to it that the men who serve them well are as worthy of being kept as the troublers in Israel, and that if any ought to go the latter should; and, in part, to the press and platform of leading laymen, upon whom it devolves to create a public opinion that shall make the church blush with shame to invite a minister who cannot be supported, and which shall cause as much shame to those who give the minister £200 or £300 a year when they could give him £500 or £600. At present, seeking a larger income is regarded as a ministerial crime, but the sin is far oftener at the door of the church which compels it. In some cases the church could double and treble the pastor's support and scarcely feel it, but will not. Such a church loses more than its minister; for he only loses a respectable house, an easy mind about the payment of his bills and the education of his children, but they lose the gratification and rich spiritual gain of doing their best for him whom God has set over them, and declared to be worthy of his hire. But I do not believe that we have many such churches. In the vast majority of cases the small incomes arise from want of earnest

thought about it, and from not feeling the obligation, and this is what ministers cannot teach, but which laymen can.

I believe none the less in what I have stated about the swarms of ministers for every vacant Church, and not more in myself than in the least of my brethren, because it so happened that in a few weeks I had three invitations. This brought the deacons as a deputation. I told them that if attachment could have bound them to me nothing could have severed us but death. They informed me what I had already found out, that ministers had to live, that they had seen the bulk of the people, and were able to offer me £50 or £60 more, having found a ready response throughout the congregation. I told them that that was as much as they ought to offer, and I would let a medical man and a Higher Being decide. I did as I promised, and was ordered to remove to the town, which in these pages shall be called Langton. Since I had to leave I felt it quite as a relief that I had to go to this place, inasmuch as the salary being £270 relieved me of the suspicion of being in any way mercenary. The £270 was the bare pew rents. The Langton people were candid enough to inform me that they had given £300 a-year to the last pastor, but that they had had to make it up, and that the friends who had done so had wearied. They added, however, that if I made it a *sine qua non*, there would be no doubt about the same sum being guaranteed to me. But

thus early I had very strong convictions about guarantees, and decidedly declined one. First: because I should like to have some experience of the men who are to give .the money before receiving it at their hands: in other words, I could not take what was regarded as extra money, unless I felt sure that the givers looked upon it as an obligation to their Lord. Secondly: because if they were men of the higher sort, I could not pay that tribute to their manhood when circumstances demanded it, without seeming to the outer crowd to be fawning and flattering, and if they were coarse men, the consciousness of being the support of the minister could not fail to make them petty tyrants, both over him and the Church. Thirdly: because the guarantee is rarely for more than three years, and what does that mean but going at the end of that term, as surely as it comes, if in any way or manner the displeasure of the guarantors has been aroused. Fourthly: the guarantee is not always very valuable. I am not impeaching the honour of our churches. As a rule they are notoriously honourable, but there are cases of guarantees in which to be safe it is just as well to know who will guarantee the guarantors, and especially as to stability of purpose and length of days. To cite one instance out of many. I know a minister of considerable attainments, who responded to an invitation which guaranteed him £220 a-year, £50 of it being given by a rather moneyed, but very vulgar-minded, man. He had no sooner set-

tled than he was convinced that this man meant to have the £50 out of his sleeping hours and daily peace, in other words that he was to surrender his self-respect. Of course he rebelled,; but this brought a note from his supporter to say that the place had not increased according to his expectation, and that therefore his subscription would cease. I have only to add that the minister was in very weak health, had five children, had taken a house with the expectation of having £220 a-year, had no provision made for his family, and was obliged to mortgage his life policy.

Are ministers, then, to be dependent upon pew rents? Such an alternative would be better than a certain kind of guarantees. Take any one of the evils I have mentioned, and is not the most grinding poverty infinitely better? But the alternative is not the only one. The old pew rent system is one of the worst possible. Most persons could give, and would give as much once a month as they do once in three months; and if they gave it weekly they would be ashamed at the thought of giving a twelfth of their present quarterly rent. In any case the guarantee ought to be from the *Church*, and at least the majority ought to pay towards it. Any other method is not in the spirit of Congregationalism.

Langton was by no means the place I had desired, but I felt sure that it would prove the right one, for I had left the matter in the hands of Him who is pledged for our guidance. By this time I had come to believe that real prayer is as sure to be answered as that there

is a God to hear it. Notwithstanding what is called the "Reign of Law," "the Universality of Law," and "the Stability of Law," the general laws leave a margin wide enough for special action. We are at liberty to create laws for ourselves, and, as a matter of fact, do. Does not the reckless man? Does not the sensualist? and the self-seeker? and the dishonourable? Then why not the prayerful and God-fearing man? If we are certain that our prayers are not our prejudices, and our selfishnesses, but our deep desire for God's glory, we may be certain that prayer is the very Angel of the Lord to us. I have often since consoled myself with such thoughts. But it is well that we cannot foresee the future; for had I foreseen the sea of tribulation through which I had to pass, and how red with my own heart's blood it would have to be, I fear that I should have played the coward.

Farewell sermons are very suggestive. A minister who was leaving his people after several years of disagreement, announced the following for his last text:—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels."—Matt. xxv. 41. With the following divisions the text had due emphasis: I. "Depart." II. "Ye cursed." III. "Into everlasting fire." IV. "Prepared for the Devil and his angels."

Here is the outline of a minister's last discourse who was charged with want of success. "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a

pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." Proverbs xxvii. 22.

I.—The operation described.

"Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle." And this is what I have attempted to do: 1. Very earnestly; 2. Very perseveringly; 3. Very conscientiously.

II.—The ineffectiveness predicted.

"Yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

This is what I have discovered: 1. To my sorrow, for I have thus laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought; 2. Almost without exception, for I have brayed you all to little purpose.

A non-abstainer who was leaving a very strong teetotal Church, where in consequence things had got awry, preached to his people for the last time from the subjoined sketch.

"I am become like a bottle in the smoke." Psalm cxix. 83.

I.—Types of character.

1. The bottle.

The bottle referred to was made of skin, which (1) wore well; (2) held well; (3) preserved well. All these are attributes of a good minister. The skin bottle often carried wine, which (1) maketh glad the heart of man; but (2) maketh heavy the souls of teetotallers. Here again we have the characteristics of a good minister.

2. The smoke.

Smoke is (1) very clouding; (2) very hurtful; (3) very obnoxious; (4) very empty. There are men quite as clouding, quite as hurtful, quite as obnoxious, quite as empty as smoke.

II.—Extremes in combination.

The bottle in the smoke is suggestive of (1) a good man in bad company; (2) a good man in disagreeable company; (3) a good man in hurtful company.

My own farewell sermons do not stand out in my memory with half so much prominence as the last occasion on which I met the Church at the Lord's table. It proved an ordeal of the severest description. I looked forward to it with some apprehension, but I thought and hoped that I had nerved myself sufficiently to get through. I had yet to learn how much of the woman there was in me. After singing the first hymn I commenced the usual address, but the first word was the last, indeed the whole of it was never uttered, repeated efforts only provoking intenser, and at last overwhelming, emotion. There immediately followed a quick half-stifled sob throughout the whole chapel. Before five minutes were passed away I was leaning on the table, my hands covering my face and crying like a child. As the trial was the sorest through which I had passed for many a year, so the grief was the greatest. It was long since I had shed a tear, but now I was thoroughly unmanned and helpless. When I could speak I asked one of the deacons to give out a hymn, but he replied, "Its no use, Sir, no one can

sing." As I was still unable to speak, the bread and wine were carried round without even the reading of the passages of Scripture so appropriate to the occasion. The service then ended. No hymn was sung, and no benediction pronounced. My retirement from the chair was the signal that the end had come, and that scene in my life's history has yet to be repeated. It cannot be described. It was suppressed heart-rending sorrow.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW SPHERE.

LANGTON is a large manufacturing town in the north of England, the population being little short of 100,000 souls. Its colour is true blue, and it is zealous enough on behalf of its politics to break any number of Liberal heads rather than allow itself to be represented by one. Its integrity at the hustings is proclaimed almost as loudly as the yells by which it is interrupted, but a horrible suspicion often darkens the minds of the defeated candidates that penny pies were sold with something better than meat inside, and that the newly-organized "loan society" lent more than it will ever get back again.

Dissent has very little prestige, and on no occasion has had more. Perhaps in no town in England has it had a history so chequered and trying. Not only has it had a population traditionally against it to deal with, but peculiarly combustible elements from time to time associated with it internally. Only a Church founded on a rock could have braved the storms and borne the rendings which have been its lot. It has not been unusual for Nonconformists of position and wealth to

come to the town, but they have rarely identified themselves with their own Church. Not a few of the most influential and earnest men in the Episcopal Church would have been Dissenters had they not seen enough to alienate them.

There are four Baptist chapels, only one of which gives its minister over a hundred a-year, the others obtaining highest doctrines at the lowest price. Two of the congregations are fed with particular redemption and final perseverance for £1 a-week respectively. By what means their ministers are fed I am unable to state.

The Independent congregations are three in number. The smallest of them worship in a decidedly handsome Gothic structure, but from the first have scarcely been able to keep the doors open. The new building was to have wrought wonders, but in this respect it has only proved the vanity of human expectations. Whatever may be the cause, let it not be put down to lack of variety of ministers, not less than four in the past ten years having officiated. According to custom the minister who built it was rewarded with an opportunity of abdicating in favour of a younger man. In quick succession three young men were "called," one of them retired to enter the Church of England, another to go to Heaven, and a third, whilst I write, is passing through bitterer trials than fall to the lot of most men. The most recent building was erected by a large split from the Church over which I preside, during a pre-

vious pastorate. As the division did not date back more than three years when I came to the town, I of necessity heard much of it, and was destined to know it all.

The congregation to which I came was the oldest, the largest, and most influential of the three, although the chapel which seated 1200 persons was as yet too large for it. Four of my predecessors are yet alive, which also indicates that my people can do with a change. Mr. Carlson, as the people say, "had his troubles," the last being a convulsion which stirred the whole town. The Rev. Dr. Clapton was his successor, and was successful. The church was enlarged, owing chiefly, it is said, to the soundness of his doctrine and his unfailing prudence. Mr. Davids came next, and in less than five years retired before a perfect hurricane with 120 members. He was by far the ablest of my predecessors, and was followed by Mr. Real, one of the most amiable of pastors, who left just in time to avoid a rupture, for he had never attracted a congregation, and the £300 a-year, which had been promised, had become a weariness to the flesh.

I soon discovered that the head of the Church was a Mr. Teazer. The origin of his greatness had been laid by Dr. Clapton. The said doctor was very much troubled by a deacon who called in question his pulpit ministrations from week to week. Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson were elected deacons with the understanding that they were to be faithful unto death—so at least

said a very respectable tradition. This grave mistake on the part of Dr. Clapton was paid for less by himself than by his successors; for besides much else that is defective, these men were arrogant beyond measure, and the purpose for which they had been elected encouraged them to feel that henceforth they were the arbiters of both minister and people. But Mr. Rowdyson had no chance of sitting on the same throne with Mr. Teazer. The former carried the moroseness and mercilessness of his soul upon his face, whilst the latter could smile under any circumstances at a moment's notice. Mr. Rowdyson had brains enough, and just of the kind, to have made a useful member of "the order of Jesus," but the unmistakeable hardness of the man made them of little use to him in our church life. They were of immense advantage, however, to Mr. Teazer, and he made the best of them. In the last rupture, Mr. Rowdyson had stated in the Church meeting that he would "sooner work with the Devil than Mr. Davids." This was a hard saying, but if it damaged the speaker, it helped forward the purpose of Mr. Teazer. Besides, though Mr. Teazer was not a rich man, he was a little prince compared to Mr. Rowdyson. Originally a tailor he had married his master's daughter, securing thereby the business and much beside. The marks of his origin were visible enough. From his elbows to his feet the tailor was unmistakeable. These, however, were the only traces, as he was now a woollen draper. Many things conduced

to give this man the place to which he aspired, and to which he had long ago laid claim. He was supposed to be liberal, and I confess that I should have thought so myself, had I not perceived that he scarcely gave a guinea that was not in the shape of an investment. Whenever pure generosity was appealed to, I had always to note its absence, and sometimes with burning indignation. On one occasion I knew that there was a widow and fatherless children who discovered that he had a claim, not only upon their savings, but upon the life policy of the dead, and even on the sewing-machine upon which in great part their livelihood depended, and all of which he had the heart to demand. I soon discovered, too, that in disbursing the Church poor's money, of which he carried the bag, that he gave very much of it in a way which left the impression with the recipients that they were exclusively indebted to him. As a sample of many other transactions, I may state that he placed a harmonium in one of our schools, which he had received in lieu of a bad debt, and that after being regarded as the donor of it for seven years, and receiving much honour, he made a claim of £50 for it to the committee! His method of conducting business with the religious world was, as may be anticipated, of the saintliest kind. When I bought cloth I was to have it 'at a shilling a yard less because I was a minister of the Gospel;' if I asked the price of a hat, it was so much to ordinary mortals, but for the reason given, 'one shilling and sixpence

less to me.' But this man's plausibility to the crowd was quite extraordinary. Of course he rarely made himself an enemy. The guiding principle of his action was expediency. In all the years I had to do with him, I never once heard him ask, "Is it right?" or "Is it wrong?" The question with him was, "Will it take?" "Will the people like it?" It was part of his religion to avoid offences, and to be all things to all men in a way of which the early Christians never dreamed. If the martyrs had been half as wise in their generation, they might have lived in comfort and died surrounded by weeping relatives. Nonconformity in Langton usually meant the sacrifice of trade, but Mr. Teazer managed his principles well enough to be a remarkable exception. To be a member of the "Liberation Society" branded some of us; but by a wise selection of the meetings he attended, by refusing our schoolroom for its use on all occasions when it could well be done, and by almost bowing down to the ground in the presence of the Vicar, the "Liberation Society" never cost him more than his guinea per annum. The Scriptural injunction to which he bowed with the most implicit obedience inside the Church and congregation always appeared to me to be, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." I was literally amazed as I discovered the extent to which he succeeded in placing members of the Church and seatholders under obligation to him. Whenever there was need of help and certainty of getting his money back,

he was sure to be a creditor; if his dinners and suppers were appreciated, it is only right to say that they were freely given. As he never read a book from year's end to year's end, he was able to devote himself to his mission unreservedly; and if he was not clever outside his shop, he had a quick eye so see a man's weakness, and was almost certain to make it subservient to his ambition. My comfort, I was told, and soon saw, depended on pleasing this man, and praising all he did. But I could as soon have offered up my life as a sacrifice to his conceit, as have given him the homage due to greatness and goodness, and consequently almost from the first I incurred his displeasure.

A deacons' meeting which occurred not very long after my settlement, confirmed me in the opinion I had been compelled to form of both Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson, and may serve to give the reader an introductory glimpse of them in their official character. I had the case of a young woman to bring before the Church who had fallen.

"What do you propose doing?" asked Mr. Teazer, when I had stated the facts.

"Well, gentlemen," I replied, "I feel disposed to deal very tenderly in cases of this kind. We ought not to pass it over entirely, but we must not forget that our Lord's example is on record, and that the law we have to enforce is one of mercy."

"I quite agree with our pastor," said Mr. Penser. "My feeling towards the poor girl, I confess, is one of

great compassion. If we suspend her from the Lord's table for a few months we have done the utmost."

"Do you think she will call that punishment," exclaimed Mr. Rowdyson, "she will only laugh at it."

Mr. Teazer gave a short laugh.

"Now, brethren," we must be gentle said Mr. Penser. "this girl may be no worse than fifty others that look down upon her. It may be that she deserves more of our pity than blame. I have watched many of these girls and wept over them. They fall very often just because they have so much human nature in them, and are so full of trust and confidence."

"And you may depend upon it," I said, following up these well timed remarks, "that the poor girl has had punishment enough already. The shame will be a sufficiently heavy burden. But in addition there will be all the dead and buried hopes of past years. Her own child indeed will become a bitterness to her."

"The Church will be disgraced," said Mr. Rowdyson, "and the young will get a license. If the officers are unfaithful, 'Ichabod' will be written on our walls before another twelve months."

"It will, indeed," said Mr. Teazer.

Mr. Hale never spoke, and from the way in which he glanced at Mr. Teazer I saw what kept him silent. But Mr. Penser stood firm and we carried the point.

At this meeting it was quite apparent that there was a very earnest desire on the part of Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson to push forward into prominence Messrs.

Badfield and Madden. Before long I had ample opportunity of seeing the men, and discovering why there was such a feverish anxiety to get them into office. They belonged to the same genus as their patrons. Their officiousness was remarkable, but their content to play second to Mr. Teazer was even more patent. Upon an investigation of their history, I found that Mr. Badfield had been the plague of another Church where they had put him in office "to keep him quiet," but had discovered, when too late, that the deacon was more intolerable than the member, and that in the late rupture of my present charge, he had been ready to do and dare whatever the Rowdyson and Teazer interest demanded. Mr. Madden's history was not particularly brilliant either. Up to a few years ago he had been a Baptist, but in consequence of having slandered the minister and being unable to substantiate the charge was unable to remain with them. In a previous town he had also been identified with dissension. These men, however, were understood to be Mr. Teazer's nomination for the next election of deacons, and were accustomed to meet in the back parlour behind his shop every Saturday night to smoke with one or two other friends, and to discuss and decide all the chapel affairs.

At the district meeting, which was the first of the kind I had attended, it was clear that Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson intended to take away my breath. To remark that one of them either proposed or seconded every other resolution, gives a very small idea of the

way in which they distinguished themselves. The paper read at the preliminary meeting, by Edward Littleton, Esq., ought not to be passed over. Its title ought to have been, "A Bill of Indictment against Ministers." Amongst other things the essayist thought that there was a lack of distinct Gospel utterance, and that to this might be traced the deadness, coldness, and worldliness of the church. There was also a want, he contended, of faithful Scriptural exposition and enforcement of its detail. "For instance," he said, "I have never heard a sermon against the eating of blood, and yet our ministers must know that although in the fifteenth chapter of Acts it is forbidden, the practice of eating black puddings is quite common." After pointing out that the usual method of killing fowls left blood in them, and ought to be protested against, he passed on to notice, at great length, the uncertain sound which was often given about "the second coming of our Lord," which he proved was nigh at hand and not afar off.

The paper was a good illustration of the man, elaborate weakness, but as he was a rich man, Mr. Teazer bowed very low in the dust of adulation before him. After expressing himself delighted with the able paper, he added that he had no doubt "that the great principles which had been suggested would be taken up by the ministers and dwelt on."

The spirit moved me to speak, and accordingly I spoke. "I cannot help," I said, "objecting to the

practice of throwing upon ministers the responsibility of any defectiveness in the church. My opinion is that the ministry is pitched to too high a note, but of this I am certain, that if the light shed from the pulpit were walked in by the people, there would be enough nobility and purity of light to create a millennium in a few years. It may be very easy and consoling to lay the sins of the people at the door of the minister, but to the Judge of all each man will have to bear his own burden. In my opinion, Mr. Littleton has, however, paid a high, though unintentional, tribute to the ministry, for if he had been able to tell us that he had heard a sermon on Black Puddings, or a distinct sound upon the views which he promulgated on the Lord's second coming, I should have been ready to join him in his strictures. When there are no longer any wrath, malice, envy, covetousness, miserliness, cowardice, and fleshly lusts, vices, and secret sins of heart to rebuke, I will forgive our ministers occupying the time of the people with the "Black Pudding" question. Our Lord's second coming is no doubt a magnificent vision, but what is the preparation for it? Not being dazzled by it, not being familiar with it, not being learned in all the prophecies which bear upon it, but by living for it. If there is to be a sensible, visible coming of our Lord, then I own that I am guilty of indistinctness of sound, but that I have yet to see harmonised either with science or the Bible. Christ is reigning now if the Scripture is to be our guide, and in all of judgment and of mercy that

comes to us, He is coming. I am quite certain that when death comes to a good man, it is the coming of the Lord in the clouds to him, and of this there cannot be a question, that readiness for that coming is readiness for any other. Our Lord promised the disciples that He would come again and receive them unto himself, and what that coming meant we know. Let me also acknowledge that I am guilty also of giving an uncertain sound about the precise time. But if the Son of Man discouraged all curiosity about it, and even declared that He knew neither the day nor the hour, I can plead guilty to the charge without any fear. Let us give a distinct sound about duty, about business, about pleasure, and about all the common obligations of life, and although this may have less appeal to the imagination it will do more good."

I had observed a stout old gentleman, whom I knew by reputation to be full of humour, and as I saw that he had only once or twice opened his eyes, I ventured to call upon him to open his lips for us. I shall not soon forget the few words he spoke with a deep sepulchral voice, and which I subjoin: "The subject, I think, friend Wilkinson, is the second coming of Christ. Seeing that the better part of the human family are not aware that He has yet been a first time, and seeing that the majority are anything but prepared to meet Him, I am at a loss to see why we should yet expect Him a second time. Besides, what has He to come for? As far as I can

see, there is no prospect of a better reception than He met with nearly 1900 years ago. Time will no doubt make a change, but at present there could only be another cross. But I feel that in the matter of preaching, our friend Wilkinson has given us much more unbrotherly advice than our friend Littleton. Preaching about Duty and Business never secured a minister either comfort or salary, and never will. If the brethren are ever contented to occupy the Sabbath with anything so practical, let me entreat them to sleep on the matter, and they will not only abandon such a thought, but if they are wise in their generation they will descant upon the visions and glories of the Second Coming. The desolation of the wicked and the reign of the saints may draw a congregation, and obtain for a servant of the Lord his daily bread; but I doubt very much whether he will either have peace or black-puddings, who lectures men on the obligations of common life."

The next day we assembled for business, the business being to make grants to the smaller churches from the fund created for the purpose by collections and subscriptions. Not a single case came before the assembly on which Edward Littleton, Esq., had not either a question to propose or a remark to make; and he was ably supported by both Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson, who certainly made their presence felt again.

It must not be imagined that all the persons to whom I have referred had as yet become troublesome

to me. On the contrary, they were foremost in requesting me to accept the invitation, and some of them were for long amongst my greatest admirers. Twelve months after I had been their minister, Mr. Badfield told Mr. Penser that he was afraid to go to chapel lest the sermon should not be equal to the last, but the last, without exception, proved the best. Of course this was too hot to last, and I was not deluded enough to suppose it would. It was not less certain that there was trouble ahead. If at the pending election of deacons Messrs. Madden and Badfield were chosen, my resignation was certain, and if they were passed by, it was not less sure that they were the men to avenge it. But the foreboding did not distress me in the least; partly, because I had no idea of the lengths to which these men could go; and, partly, because I had great faith in my people, and in the principles of Independency.

I am afraid that in introducing men who in time caused greater anxiety, annoyance, and bitterness to me than all other men together, that I have not done justice to my Church and congregation, or to the measure of happiness they provided for me from the first. Out of 220 members in the Church, and a good congregation, there were few real elements of discord beyond the men I have introduced to the reader. If a Mr. Cockle and a Mr. Moonshine are added, I do not believe that there was a man in the congregation capable of deliberate mischief. And there were many,

very many, who would have carried a heavy cross that the minister might be free, and who bore him about on their hearts, both for his work's sake and for the Lord's. The sphere opened up to me for work was just of the kind to rejoice in. There were a few rich people in the congregation, and some of them were always willing to give of their abundance when there was a cause worthy of help; a yet larger number belonged to what passes for the middle classes; and the great mass were hard working people. I liked, and still like, this variety. A congregation composed exclusively of the middle classes has never had a very powerful attraction for me. For beyond all classes of the community this class is the likeliest to put on airs, and to live in an altogether false atmosphere. No duchess in the land is so full of affectation as Mrs. Prosperous Joiner, and Royalty itself lays not half the stress upon blood which Mrs. Spirit Merchant does, if, by torturing her genealogical tree, she can get a hero, or a statesman, or a baronet in remote or even doubtful connection with it. Let either of these women set up a suburban villa, and a pony chaise, and what chance has an ordinary mortal who lives in a street, even though he wear a white tie? A congregation of such people! If religion does not then become too proper and well-bred to weep over the guilty, and to make unrestrained use of its own vocabulary, the greatest miracle of its history is performed. It is the ambition of some ministers to have a congregation of carriage people. As I cannot bring myself to being

a ministerial doll for the young ladies until they find a lover and can dispense with the doll, or the jester for the mas and pas for their evening entertainments, I do not share in this aspiration. But as little do I care for an audience composed entirely of the poor. Enterprise becomes impossible, unless external help is sought, and the minister is duly qualified for an occasional begging expedition. This involves a loss of independence. And if wealth needs the check of poverty, it is equally true that the poorer people cannot afford the absence of that refining and civilising influence which is usually associated with wealth. Like Solomon, therefore, I pray to be delivered both from riches and from poverty, but unlike him I have no desire for the happy medium. I prefer the advantages of all, and that was what I got.

CHAPTER X.

THE DIACONATE.

An election of deacons drew on. This is always regarded as an important event in an Independent Church, and I do not hesitate to say that it is never exaggerated, but often underrated. Both the prosperity of the Church and the happiness of the minister are bound up with the deacons to a very large extent. If the minister is regarded as the chief in the government of the Church, they are regarded as constituting the cabinet; if he is looked up to as the general of the army, they are looked upon as captains. My experience as well as observation enables me to say, that the peace of both pastor and people is almost entirely for them to decide. I have known churches saved from complete wreck, by the wisdom and piety of God-fearing deacons; and quite as often I have known churches brought to ruin out of which they have never again risen, by men unfit for the position. They stand between the minister and people, and by virtue of their office, and the confidence reposed in them by the Church, are able to influence either or both to an almost indefinite extent. They ought to be mediators,

peace-makers, helpmeets, for they may be. If they feel so disposed they can rob the pastor of his sleep, press upon his brow the crown of thorns, and then dig his grave. For they can throw cold water on all his zeal, and they can look cynically on all the plans which are dearest to his heart; when his motives are misunderstood, they can help the misconstruction, and when he is aspersed they can fold their arms and quietly stand by; if the congregation is thinner, they can make it the occasion for embittering reflections; and if there is, for a time, a lack of spiritual results, they can make quite oppressive the saddest meditations of a good man's life. If there be cruelty in the Diaconate, there is power to mock and scourge the minister; if there be subtlety, there is opportunity to lay snares for his confusion, into which, at sometime or other, he is absolutely certain to fall; if there be wrath, it can stab and wound him as long as there is life left in him. There is not a place under the sun in which wickedness can triumph so successfully and with such impunity as in the Diaconate. Under the shew of serving God, it can work out all the deadliest curses of its own depravity. But on the other hand, where can man be so helpful either in the work of God, or to the ambassador of Christ? Whatever good the minister accomplishes the deacons may share in, and of almost all the greater blessings of the pastor's life they may be the source. They can soothe the minister's aching heart; they can give him sympathy in the

hour of depression; they can uphold his hands when they are falling; they can turn irritation and alienation towards him into peace and blessing; they can cheer him by the bright side when the dark obtrudes itself; in short, they can be the medium, above most others, by which God becomes to him the God of Hope, the God of Peace, the God of Consolation. Deacons belong to all classes just as ministers do. I have known some of whom I shudder to think, for so entirely has the office been used to assert self-importance, that even the most devilish machinations have not been shrunk from, if that has been thwarted. But I rejoice to say that such are in a minority, and that amongst the deacons I have known and worked with, are some of the bravest, noblest, devoutest men whom I have ever known or hope to know. One of the causes which lead to the appointment of unfit men, is the readiness of the people to vote into office persons who make themselves prominent. Talking power is often deemed a sufficient qualification, and the gift of prayer in public is sometimes deemed essential. If these capacities exist, so much the better, but men who obtrude them will simply be officious. Often the best men are the most retiring and reticent.

As our election of deacons drew on, Messrs. Madden and Badfield became quite excited. The former being certain of election, borrowed the trust deed and copied it, so that he might know exactly what his powers would be, and volunteered a larger sum for a charitable

purpose than he had ever been known to give, or was considered capable of giving; whilst the latter obtained a meeting and platform omnipresence. If ever men offered a high price for a position, these men did for the office of deacon. If it had been put up for auction, I sometimes try to imagine them bidding. It is certain that no one in proportion to their means would have made better offers, and that if they had not secured it they would have made it rather dear for some one else. Notwithstanding all this, and Mr. Teazer's undisguised desire for their election, they were not in the list. The vote, according to custom, was taken by ballot, and they were literally "nowhere."

Of course these men now gave a further revelation of themselves. Up to this time I had been "our dear pastor" in their prayers, but now I was dropped out altogether; neither as "dear" nor as "pastor" had I any continued existence. There was a decided change also in their attitude as hearers. They looked far less at me, and much more at the Bible, which of course might be an increase of piety. Instead of appearing interested when I spoke, they had a look of being puzzled; but of course this might have been in consequence of the more perplexing nature of the subjects I selected.

My first real trouble, however, came from Mr. Teazer. This gentleman informed me one day in a very off-hand manner that he had invited Dr. Clapton to deliver a lecture. Now, inasmuch as he knew full well that this

gentleman had acted in what he himself admitted to be a very unhandsome manner, I was not a little annoyed. When, however, I discovered that not only had I not been asked, but that no one else had, I felt that there was something which required explanation, and I said so. At the next deacon's meeting I was accosted by him with a rudeness and an insolence which cannot be put on paper. The first thing he did was to fling at me an envelope, informing me that I should find the quarter's salary in it, and in the same breath he enquired, "What is this you have been saying?"

"Do you refer to Dr. Clapton's lecture?" I replied. "Of course I do," answered Mr. Teazer, "and you have said that I never asked you for the use of the school-room, when you know I did."

"You told me that he was coming," I explained, "but most certainly you never asked me. It is quite possible that you may be under the impression that you asked me, but you never did."

"Oh! that is mere shuffling," said Mr. Teazer.

Now, it so happens, that although I feel as keenly as most men, I have a control over my feelings, which has never failed me in the most trying ordeal, and for which I have had many a time to be deeply thankful. For the present, therefore, I allowed this to pass. But after the completion of the business, I said, "Before we part, gentlemen, I should like Mr. Teazer to withdraw a word which he spoke in great haste. I am quite willing to own that he was under the im-

pression that he asked me, but as positive that he did not." We shook hands, and for the moment all seemed fair again.

It soon became quite clear, however, that I was not forgiven. Although I never liked the man, I felt that a great responsibility as a Christian minister rested upon me, and that I was bound to seek peace. Accordingly, I addressed a note to him, reminding him that unless he overcame any personal feeling that remained, the gulf might widen till it rent the Church, and begging him to call and talk the matter over, and then bury it for ever. When we met, I soon saw how useless this effort would be, for say what I would, I could not get the man's eyes. They roamed about the room, fixing themselves on the ceiling, on the walls, on the books, but never on me. This always destroys my confidence. A man's eyes are the windows of his soul; if he dare not let me look through them, there is something wrong.

Mr. Rowdyson was not long in becoming quite as fully estranged; but on totally different grounds. If this gentleman was not very beautiful himself, it is only fair to say that he had a daughter pretty enough to make any man quite willing to look at her. Despite the fact that handsome women have been the cause of half the world's trouble, I confess that I have never voted any one of them other than a goddess condescending to adorn and bless a world which otherwise would be hard, unlovely, and reft of all its bliss. Whilst I am

quite certain that I could not marry a woman who was not good, and who could not be in most respects the companion of my life, yet I can admire the form and face of the haughtiest and wickedest woman in creation, if she is handsome. This is very shocking for an Independent minister, but as confession is good for the soul, I ought to write it. That being so, it will be easily understood that I did not hesitate to go occasionally to Mr. Rowdyson's house when pressed to do so, and that on one or two occasions on meeting her out, when there was no one else to do it, I saw Miss Rowdyson home. But when asked by the father, 'what my intentions were,' I cannot express my astonishment. The man in the dream who is often a convenient parallel was no parallel to me. If I would not take Mr. Rowdyson's daughter for better or for worse, it was soon placed beyond dispute, that I must take the alternative for worse and not for better.

Mr. Rowdyson's mission from this time was to sit in judgment upon my sermons; and an opportunity soon occurred to pronounce a very decisive and emphatic condemnation. I preached a sermon on "Joseph's Temptation," and on this subject and what it involves, I confess that I spoke very strongly, because I felt very earnestly. At the time there were matters bearing upon it before the public which were quite notorious, and which had a tendency to corrupt the mind. Only a few nights previously, moreover, when returning home from an engagement after ten o'clock, I passed a

young member of my congregation, who, in a state of considerable excitement, said, "Mr. Wilkinson, I am quite thankful that you were passing. I have just left a girl who, I believe, would have drawn me after her if I had not felt sure that the footsteps were yours." This impressed me all the more, because I had long had reasons to believe that the chastity of our young men was greatly jeopardised, and that many of them were being ruined at night in the very streets down which we walked during the day. I remember well the earnestness with which I spoke out, but that modesty might receive no shock, I had prepared the sermon with more than usual care. I did not object to the presence of young women, for already my heart had bled over the downfall of more than one upon whom I had looked full of hope. I have never preached a sermon in my life for which I received the thanks of so many young men, indeed, almost every post of the following week brought me some acknowledgment. But how I was vilified by Mr. Rowdyson! Not only did he canvass many of the people, and try to persuade them into the belief that their families would be injured, but he saw each one of the deacons privately, and only failed in making it the cause of great unpleasantness, because so many testified to the real good they had got, and from the manly way in which some of his colleagues met him.

As all this and a vast deal more had failed to accomplish a purpose which was now very apparent,

namely to alienate the people from me, Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson discovered that there ought to be another election of deacons. I saw well enough through the move, for Messrs. Madden and Badfield had recently been pushed forward with renewed vigour, and had themselves given unmistakeable signs of being in training for the race. There was some show of necessity for a second election of officers, although only a short time had elapsed since the last, inasmuch as two of the gentlemen then elected had declined to serve, a third had left the town, and we were reduced to four, and, therefore, I did not oppose it. The next consideration was the number, and that the door might be opened very wide in order that Messrs. Madden and Badfield might walk in, six were decided upon, and this was allowed to pass. Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson did their best for them, and it need not be added that they left no stone unturned themselves. As no four gentlemen ever worked with greater ardour, the result was counted on with strong assurance. Of course they were at the Church meeting, and of course they made themselves quite conspicuous by asking questions. It would never have done for the Church to be ignorant of their existence, and so they each rose and spoke with much dignity and devotion several times previous to the balloting. The obsequiousness displayed to myself was quite remarkable, and taken in connection with much that was quite contrary, and which had lasted from the last election till now,

such conduct would have been quite bewildering in its mystery, if I had not been uncharitable enough to believe that my friends were to be offered a price for votes. Whilst the scrutineers examined the papers these gentlemen were decorous in the extreme. But when I read out the following names as the persons selected, namely, Messrs. McGavin, Alder, Passmore, Cockle, Fowler, and Lord, the shock cannot be described.

The latter gentleman declined to serve, and Mr. Fowler only stayed long enough in the town to make us feel that we lost a hard-working, useful, and good man; so that before long the diaconate consisted of eight.

The wrath of Messrs. Madden and Badfield revealed the last dregs of the littleness and bitterness of which they were capable. If asked for a subscription, they either "declined for special reasons," or informed the petitioners that they might "go and ask one of the new deacons." After their first non-election they had made manifest their displeasure, but now it became positively saddening to see. In chapel their behaviour was beyond anything which I could have conceived. Sabbath worship seemed nothing so much as a good joke. If I announced the number of a hymn it seemed to amuse them, and they must nod and laugh across the chapel at one another. Its effect upon many persons became quite distracting, and others were often kept from chapel on account of it. When I thought that these men might have been elected deacons, I trembled.

If Mr. Teazer had lost the men he had been seeking, it was quite amusing to see how he laid himself out to subordinate to his own purpose those who had been elected. All that the drawing-room, and "a quiet evening," and "a bit of supper," and much cajolery and flattery could do, was done. His affection for some of them was as sudden as it was vehement. One of them was the leader of the singing, and with his performances he had been as disgusted as he was now charmed. "Mr. Passmore must be removed," he had stated more than once; but Mr. Passmore was declared, after his election, to be "the very life of the singing pew." After a new tune, instead of shrugging his shoulders, he did everything but rush into Mr. Passmore's arms and embrace him openly. The only man, however, who was fairly caught was Mr. Cockle, and for a time I was more amused with the result than anything else. Mr. Cockle had professed to see through Mr. Teazer and to have understood him for many a year; indeed, I had never heard one man utter stronger sentiments concerning another than Mr. Cockle volunteered concerning Mr. Teazer; but evidently he had not counted on the cakes and wine with which he was destined to be regaled, for the effect was electric.

The development of Mr. Cockle in his new character became very rapid. In remembrance, however, of what had been his attitude, it was not hard to see that he played a very difficult and a consciously inconsistent part. In time I began to regard him as Mr. Teazer's

letter to me; sometimes he was a letter of advice; sometimes a letter of warning; but to the last the handwriting was easy to read, and the matter exceedingly suggestive. There were necessarily a few original notes to each epistle, and they were far otherwise than the inspiring genius bargained for. For instance, as we sat together one night he ventured far enough to suggest my resignation, but on seeing my astonishment, he added, "Not for the people's sake, for it would be a great blow to them, but for your own, for Mr. Teazer is damaging you, and I can see that he means to surround you with difficulty, from which you will be glad to get free."

"But would you, as a Christian man, advise me," I said, "to think simply of myself, and to forsake this Church when it is giving me so many tokens of its affection?"

"I certainly would," he said; "for the fact is, Mr. Wilkinson, you little know the man, or the men whom he can lead. I was with them in the last rupture, and I know enough to be convinced that if you stand in their way, they will run you down to the ground. I was literally amazed at their hardness, unscrupulousness, and organization. They met in committee, they had the town divided into districts, and, if there was a member of either Church or congregation whose mind was not literally poisoned against Mr. Davids, it was a miracle."

"Admitting all that, Mr. Cockle," I said, "but

would it not be giving them courage to persevere in such a cause, if I retired before it? Besides, would it not be surrendering the Church to men who are not fit to rule in it, and would it not therefore be treachery on my part both to the Church and its Lord? If these men are what you say, and you ought to know them, I dare not go. If England can find soldiers who will stand where duty commands, although death is sure to sweep past and strike them ruthlessly down in cold blood; and if she has sailors who will stick to the ship even at the risk of sinking with it, am I to run away from a Church just because I am threatened a little difficulty? What too are the circumstances? Between 200 and 300 members of the Church, and the whole congregation without exception, are giving me proof upon proof of their attachment and appreciation, whilst a few individuals, because they cannot have the supreme control in all things, have resolved that I shall not remain. And what do these persons do for the place that minister after minister should retire on their account, and the desire of the people be ignored? To my income they give just as much as anyone else who has the same space to sit in, but to the various institutions all of them put together do not give nearly as much as many individuals who are showing their friendship for me in all ways, and to whom, I believe, my going would be a real sorrow. Show me that there is a desire for my retirement amongst any considerable number of people, and I will not hesitate for a moment.

For, of course, I can have nothing to gain by staying, but might have much to gain by seeking a removal."

"There is great reason in what you say Mr. Wilkinson, but I fear a conflict, and, between ourselves, I believe that Mr. Teazer is preparing for it."

"I should be extremely sorry for that; indeed, nothing must be left undone to avert it; and I promise that among other things, I will see Mr. Teazer at once."

This interview I brought about, according to my pledge, at an early opportunity, but it ended even less satisfactorily than others which I have sketched. I could plainly see that Mr. Teazer began to regard these overtures for reconciliation on my part as signs of weakness, fear, and submission. Evidently, he did not either appreciate or understand them, for on each occasion he was less courteous, and much more off-handed.

At this time I had been upwards of three years at Langton, and there had been all along every indication of real prosperity. Whatever money we wanted we obtained. Amongst other things, we collected 400*l.* for an organ in a few days, and year after year we cleared off hundreds of pounds of debt. Best of all, and gladdest of all to my heart, there were signs of life in the Church, and new life was imported into it at every meeting. Our future appeared to a considerable extent to depend upon the diaconate, which now stood thus: Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson bent on

mischief; Messrs. Cockle and Hale somewhat plastic in their hands, for the latter was a weak edition of the former; Messrs. McGavin, Alder, Passmore, and Penser, all loving peace, order, and uprightness.

The last four were destined to be with me in a storm which tested and proved what manner of men they were, and which shattered their hearts and peace as much as it did mine. We had to battle for the right, and resist the wrong even unto blood. Often we had to meet around the altar of prayer sad and weary, feeling the burden almost too much, but sometimes we knew the joy of the Lord as those alone can, who follow Him in evil as well as good report. Some of the bitterest agonies which I have known, these men shared, and, I believe, that some of the most memorable experiences of their lives were linked with mine. I love them all. To two of them I owe more than I can express. Many a time have I prayed that what I cannot repay, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may. Messrs. McGavin and Alder are strong men, and tender as strong. They could stand like a rock, and I have seen them weep like little children. I verily believe that neither life nor death could have tempted them from the path of duty. I sometimes felt that it was worth while passing through tribulation to make the discovery of so much sterling goodness.

CHAPTER XI.

RESIGNATIONS.

WHEN certain persons quarrel, it is said that other certain persons get their rights; and in consequence of a quarrel between Messrs. Teazer and Rowdyson, I thought I was about to get mine. These gentlemen had made preliminary arrangements for a business, when Mr. Teazer, getting a better offer, threw Mr. Rowdyson overboard. Such at least was the representation made to me by the latter, and, after reading to me a somewhat voluminous correspondence, thus wound up: "And this convinces me that, if it will suit his convenience and interest, there is no obligation, human or Divine, which he is not capable of trampling on." As Mr. Rowdyson drew nearer to me after this than his rupture with Mr. Teazer warranted, I could not help the conviction that there was another motive; many things suggested it, and as he turned upon me like a madman when a report was circulated, that I had proposed to a young lady who was not Miss Rowdyson, I was scarcely left the option of thinking much about it; quite universally, too, were his motives and actions interpreted in that light. The circum-

stances in connection with the alleged proposal must be explained.

The people at the Tadcaster Street Chapel held a bazaar for the liquidation of a heavy debt upon the building, and although I had long ago come to the conclusion that a bazaar is the enchanted cave of fairies, which, to enter, is almost to be lost, I was rash enough to resolve on visiting it and spending £5. Several reasons induced me to be so bold. First: I felt that my presence was due to my brother-minister, who had often shown sympathy towards me, and would have helped me under any circumstances, and I knew that the success or non-success of the bazaar would affect him considerably. Secondly: the people had made a great effort, and therefore had a lawful claim upon the representatives of the denomination. And then as £5 was about as much as I could afford, and I had bound myself not to exceed it, I could not cross many fair hands with gold, and so run the risk of having my fortune often told by tempting lips and eyes full of promise. If I was to pass along the coast of the Syrens, and within hearing of their enchanting voices, I bound myself as fast to bachelorhood as did Ulysses to the ship's mast.

The bazaar proved as worthy of the tempters as they did of the radiant scene amid which they moved. They were in great force; two or three of them hovered about every stall, stood around every piano, and waited in ambush wherever the enemy was likely to venture. I

had no sooner entered the room than I was attacked, and if I was not bewildered, I suppose I ought to have been; for a tall, graceful girl, with laughing eyes, and hair flowing upon her shoulders, must needs pull crackers with me. We pulled more than one, and I actually enjoyed pulling crackers with this dashing girl. It was easy to see that she was surrounded by captives, and quite as clear to her mind that I was to be another wherewith to grace her triumphs. When a man, however, has turned thirty, it is not so easy to make him a fool, though easy enough to make him admire. This girl too was engaged, and her lover was never very far off, which was both extremely wise and very foolish on his part. For, if mounting guard saved all comers from ignorance of his claims, it did nothing so much as make this girl bewitching. "It is my holiday," she said, "and besides, every girl has a license at a bazaar," and even her lord and master had no answer. She was no favourite with the ladies; Mrs. Robinson, who had two daughters in a state of languish, thought her "very bold and forward," and Mrs. Jackson looked upon her as quite "unfit to be an engaged young lady." Most of the ladies of her own age were "disgusted," "shocked," "out of all patience,;" they "wondered," "were surprised," "could not have believed it;" and altogether laid the matter so heavily to heart, and saw it so earnestly in all its moral bearings, that I could scarcely believe my own eyes, when I saw them doing their best to fascinate

and play at mermaids, syrens, and sea-nymphs themselves. Several times I had to look again, and then try to solve the problem.

The bazaar ended, and I went off to Switzerland. Amid the wild mountains, the rich valleys, the foaming waterfalls, and the sleeping lakes, there was enough to create and more than enough to nurse romance, but this young lady scarcely once obtruded upon my thoughts, and never upon my profounder meditations. And this will not be wondered at. Nothing had passed between us that might not have passed between brother and sister. I had not even bought her a present. She had sold me her photograph, but this had been with the consent of her lover; indeed, to get money for the bazaar, he gave her his own to sell. Upon no occasion previous to the bazaar had I ever seen her in my life, and save at the house of her elect father-in-law the night after the bazaar closed, I never saw her after, nor did there ever pass between us anything approaching to a communication. The ladies will therefore forgive me for saying that the memory of her entirely slumbered, and perhaps all my readers will be as much startled as I was myself at the manner in which it was revived.

One of the first persons I met on my return home was my deacon, Mr. Rowdyson. After an absence of four weeks, perhaps my charity was enlarged and my mood a manlier one, for I stretched out my hand to greet his with an unqualified good will; but it was

refused, and I was rudely repulsed. This was in the public street, and on a Sabbath morning. It was hard to say whether the mystery or the pain was the greater; before long the latter was increased, though the former was cleared up. That very night I received a letter from Mr. Rowdyson, charging me with having proposed marriage to the young lady of the bazaar, with having weaned her from her lover, and with having arranged for various interviews with her. Immediately upon reading the letter I hurried off to see Mr. Rowdyson. I found him actually under the impression that I was to be married to this lady. That was easily disposed of, but by no possibility could I bring him to see that she was nothing more than a stranger to me. At last I offered to go with him either alone or with a third party, and to allow him to ask the lady in my presence any questions, and I undertook to apologise myself for the unusual character of the visit. Some of my readers may wonder at this, but if they knew as I knew how a man of this kind can torment an Independent minister, and hint and insinuate at "grave charges," they would scarcely marvel. He refused the challenge, but there were matters which I could disprove, and did. One was that I had been with her to a pic-nic, and the other was that I had asked my sister to invite us both to her house. My sister, of course, was able and willing to give an entire denial to the statement, and gave an explanation of all that passed between us, namely, that

as my house did not permit of it, I suggested to her to ask the entire party, including the lady and her lover. I was able also to show that instead of being at a pic-nic with the lady, it was with her lord! Mr. Rowdyson would not be convinced, so I took his letter and the letter of his resignation as deacon with which it was accompanied to the deacons' meeting, and asked that a deputation might be appointed to see Mr. Rowdyson, requiring him either to substantiate the charges or to retract them. Mr. Teazer absented himself from this meeting, for, as I afterwards learnt, he expected that I would rather resign than have an examination. To make the matter absolutely certain, and lead the Church to believe, as I thought, that there was something unspeakable, Mr. Cockle also sent in his resignation. I was confirmed in the suspicion, and so were some of his colleagues, from the fact that although he consented to defer his resignation for one month, he would not on any account postpone it beyond that period; and yet the only explanation which he could or would give was, that his practise as dentist was increasing, and that he wanted more time to prepare for preaching engagements, which he occasionally obtained on the Methodist plan. As there had never been an angry word between him and myself, or between him and any of his colleagues, the question which we all naturally asked was, "Why does he choose this time to press his resignation?" The deputation was appointed to see Mr. Rowdyson, and

it was agreed to accept both his and Mr. Cockle's resignations.

As the result of repeated interviews between Mr. Rowdyson and the deputation, and my informing him that unless he gave me some vindication I must let the Church decide, he addressed to me the following extraordinary letter:—

"Mr. WILKINSON,

"DEAR SIR,—After thinking over the contents of my former letter to you and the charge I there made I think I acted indiscreetly in founding charges so serious on evidence not in its character sufficiently conclusive to warrant them and further after consideration of Mr. W.'s statement that he never intended to give her an impression that he was anxious to become her suitor though I may think there was some imprudence in his demeanour towards her I would give him credit for truthfulness in his statement."

This letter, without punctuation, and so extraordinary in composition, was not all that I might have claimed; but for the sake of peace I accepted it, and did not even have it read aloud, although Mr. Rowdyson had industriously circulated his impressions and charges. The Church accepted both the resignations without even asking a single question, and so I tided over a crisis which cost me more anxiety than can be conceived, or would easily be believed, except by Indedendent ministers who have been conscious of walking in a plot. But there was to be another resignation

yet, namely, Mr. Hale's. To most of us this was no surprise; for as he had always been a quiet man, and several members of the Church worked for him, his resignation would be likely to excite questioning, and the questioning might be fanned into a flame. Neither were we at all surprised that he gave no reason whatever for the step, for none existed, except a reason which none of them dared yet own, but to which the eyes of the Church had long been opening. We were all, however, unprepared for the resolution which Mr. Teazer took out of his pocket at the deacons' meeting, and submitted to us for proposition at the Church meeting, for it began thus: "This Church regrets that for various reasons Mr. Hale has seen it his duty to resign," etc. We all saw immediately where the resolution had been decided upon, and why it was thus worded.

Mr. Alder, who was the first to speak, enquired, "May I ask, Mr. Teazer, what the various reasons are, for they are certainly not stated, and I am not aware of one."

"No doubt he has his reasons," replied Mr. Teazer, "and that ought to be quite enough for us."

"By no means," said Mr. McGavin, "the Church will be led to conclude that things in the diaconate are seriously wrong, and that we vindicate him in leaving us. Now I know of nothing whatever to justify the step. In the diaconate I have never heard a harsh or unkind word spoken to him by any one, and therefore

until he specifies the various reasons I shall certainly assume that they do not exist, and especially as I know nothing of them."

As both Messrs. Passmore and Penser knew of no reason, and as Mr. Teazer could not assign one, we unanimously decided that the first sentence of the resolution which Mr. Teazer had brought for our acceptance should be struck out, very much to his chagrin.

This resignation, therefore, was accepted also, and as utterly failed to excite discontent as either of the former had done. But in the estimation of the gentlemen concerned, prizes were not to be thrown away for nothing; and so it was circulated, at first, "confidentially," and then, less secretly, that I had suppressed an important part of Mr. Hale's resignation. This report I traced to Mr. Madden, and as it called in question my honour and integrity, I took the matter to the deacons' meeting and obtained a deputation to see him. After repeated interviews with him, the following document was read by them at the Church meeting, and then handed over to me: "Mr. Madden acknowledges having repeated the statement made to him that Mr. Wilkinson had suppressed part of Mr. Hale's letter of resignation, but, having ascertained that the report was without foundation, expresses his sorrow that he was the medium of spreading it, and hereby apologises to Mr. Wilkinson for so doing.

"D. McGavin,
J. Passmore, } Deacons."

Mr. Rowdyson proved much more restless out of office than he had been in it. If we were free from the annoyance and irritation which he had caused in the diaconate, we were now to feel the blows he could strike as a free lance. Most of these blows, as may be divined, were struck in the dark; but in the nineteenth century this answers much better than the courage and the chivalry which scorn to take at a disadvantage, and would sooner be struck bleeding to the ground than lift a cowardly hand. Mr. Rowdyson out of office became quite awakened to a sense of his duty. He not only found out where the poorer members lived, for whom he had never shown the slightest anxiety, but he visited them, and sought to convince them, though in vain, what a much deeper anxiety the officers of the Church ought to take in them. Up to this time we had mourned the lack of service which we obtained from him in all real practical work, but he was now as instant out of season as in it. He groaned for a revival with groanings which cannot be uttered. For the first time he saw that there was no life in the Church, and for the first time he saw that the officers were "blood-guilty" in the matter. He allowed that the chapel was getting fuller, and that the Church was enlarging, and that our finances increased, but "what is our real state?" he asked. As nobody seemed able to reply to his question, it was regarded as proving that our state was bad. But Mr. Rowdyson's talents at this period shone brightest in statistics. Scarce a sermon was

preached without his numbering up the people, and recording in every conversation during the week how many disagreed upon the different questions which were discussed. There was not a class in the schools which he did not count; if any were fuller, the fact was no doubt forgotten, as we never heard it mentioned; but if one was thin, it was cause for serious examination and an indication that there was something wrong. When in office we had thought Mr. Rowdyson anything but a delightful Christian; but when free from our influence his piety was remarkable. His zeal for the spiritual condition of all his fellow-worshipers was so deep and intense, that he often mourned for them bitterly. At the prayer-meetings, if called on to pray, he wished that "his eyes were a fountain of tears that he might weep for them," and was quite eloquent in telling God what the minister ought to be, and especially in hinting at what he was not. It was unfortunate for Mr. Rowdyson that beyond Messrs. Madden, Badfield, and Teazer, there were scarcely any to bid him "God-speed," and none to ally themselves with him. It must have been ingratitude on the part of the people, for they thought that he was making himself very miserable. There might be something in the thought, but he was zealous also, and in proof of it he sent me notice that he would, at an early opportunity, propose the enclosed resolutions. The first of these resolutions was, "that an election of officers in this Church shall take place every three years;" and the last was, "that

the present officers be regarded as commencing the period of their service in the month of March, 1867, and that it terminate in the same month of 1870." The letter which accompanied these resolutions was dated May, 1868. The first of the two was somewhat surprising. Had it come from an independent member, or from some person or persons who had advocated the view, it would have been welcome to us all; but Mr. Rowdyson had never mooted such a subject whilst in office himself. If the first of the resolutions was not easy to mistake, the last was almost too patent. What it meant was just this: "some of us are disgusted at the help and strength which most of the deacons are giving to the minister, and we are determined, if it is possible, to relieve them of the trouble, and him of his shield. If we succeed we shall find it much easier to make the minister uncomfortable, and if we don't we shall have agitated the Church, which will do us no harm, but can do the officers no good. We are impatient and cannot wait, and so the deacons must please regard themselves as having been elected for precisely three years, twelve months ago. The matter, indeed, had not been thought of then; but we had no idea that circumstances like the present would arise, and that they would support the minister and baffle our schemes. The whole thing is more than justified by the fact that three of us have had our resignations accepted without the slightest sign of uneasiness in the Church. If we sacrificed ourselves it was for an object. Others must

prepare to abdicate for the same purpose; and if we can, we mean to let Messrs. Madden and Badfield come in and occupy their places; and for all our sacrificing we shall not then have long to wait for our reward. They cannot be out of office what they are in; and let us have the chance, and if there are ways and means to keep them out they shall be used."

Such was my own conviction, and those who knew the men fully shared it. At the next deacons' meeting I read his letter and resolutions, without note or comment, when, almost with the same breath, Messrs. Passmore and Penser cried out, "He means to clear us out of the way; no mistake about that."

"Well, I am thankful," said Mr. McGavin, "that it has come at last to an attack upon us. I confess I have been trying for long to draw the *animus* towards ourselves, for they cannot wrong us half as much as they can Mr. Wilkinson. I am proud, too, Mr. Wilkinson, and I cannot help saying it, that after watching you, dogging your steps, and sifting your life and your work, they are obliged to abandon the hope of getting hold of anything sufficiently important to take to the Church, or to circulate and insinuate among the members to your permanent prejudice."

"If," said Mr. Alder, "the object of these resolutions was to promote the growth of the Church, and if I believed them to emanate in a good spirit, I should only be too glad to adopt them; but because I believe them to be bad in their source, and bad in their pur-

pose, I shall certainly oppose them. It would be a great relief to me to be free from the cares and anxieties of the Church, but I shall certainly never willingly remove, if there is a likelihood of the office being filled by such men as are seeking it."

"There can be no doubt, brethren," said Mr. Penser, "that if these men got into office they would be the curse of the Church; but you need have no fear of that. The people know them only too well. If Madden and Badfield were to try fifty times they would have no chance. Look how gladly the resignations of the three have been accepted. Why, they expected deputation after deputation to wait upon them!"

Mr. Passmore laughed, Mr. Teazer winced, and then it was decided that Mr. Rowdyson must be left to take his own course about the resolutions.

The course he did take was very different to anything, which either he or we anticipated, for God took the matter into his own hands. A disease to which Mr. Rowdyson had frequently been subject overtook him and threatened him with death. I longed to call and see him, but not knowing how far my visit would be welcome or beneficial, I hesitated. When I received a note signed by himself begging me to call, I could scarcely express my thankfulness. More than once had I seen him in a similar state, but never had I seen him so repentant and so kindly. The full and candid acknowledgment which he made softened and melted my own heart. "Put these resolutions I sent you, Mr.

Wilkinson," he said, "into the fire. The spirit in which I planned them does not bear the scrutiny of these solemn hours. If health and strength had been spared me, no doubt I should have moved them; but I feel the value of affliction. God has taught me that I have been meddling with things with which I have no business; and instead of doing anything to breed mischief, I desire to be at peace with all those who are of the Household of Faith and especially with my own minister. That leads me to say, Mr. Wilkinson, that I did not use you well about that young lady. You know what I mean, and I hope that you will entirely forget and bury it. It may be that the end is coming, and as we have to meet again, let us part in forgiveness."

There was, indeed, a change in the man, but the change in his face and general aspect was not by any means so great as the inward change. The hardness of his nature seemed entirely melted. We prayed together and were at peace. That visit was worth thousands of pounds to me; nay, I felt a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It increased with each visit, and when Mr. Rowdyson was well enough to leave his house, I rejoiced in his joy.

Shortly after this I took a tour into Germany, and on my return received quite an ovation from my people. It took the form of a welcome-meeting and the presentation of testimonials; the enthusiasm was unbounded. Messrs. Teazer, Madden, Badfield, Cockle, and Hale were, of course, absent, and, to my amaze-

ment, Mr. Rowdyson; but upwards of 500 persons were present, and a note which I received on the following day from the secretary of the fund assured me that the subscriptions had included almost every seat-holder in the chapel, that there had been no need to ask a second time of any individual, and that they might have obtained four or five times the amount of money, but purposely refrained, because they were not so anxious for it to represent money value as numerical strength, and because they were anxious that it should not interfere with the liquidation of the yet remaining debt. The committee frankly owned that as they had repeatedly urged me to stay at Langton, on the ground of the attachment of the people and the confidence they reposed in me, they felt bound to give me proof that the feeling was what they represented. At this meeting, therefore, I pledged myself to remain with them, but I was fully conscious that the danger was not yet passed. Mr. McGavin not only candidly owned this, but confirmed my suspicion, by proof for which I was quite unprepared. He had met Mr. Rowdyson, he said, whilst the meeting and testimonial were in course of preparation, and he had attacked him on the subject like a tiger, and left him with these words: "if there had not been a division and split in the Church such a short time ago, there should be one now, but this meeting and testimonial are quite providential, for they are certain to end in Mr. Wilkinson's going." "But I am certain," said Mr. McGavin to

me, "that we have done the right thing; hitherto we had no idea that the affection of the people towards you was so strong, and if we wanted fuller proof it is in the rage of these men. They say it is 'providential,' and I believe that; but they know very well that they worked against it all they could, and I wish, therefore, they could see that they are fighting against 'Providence.' It is a source of great happiness to us, Mr. Wilkinson, that we took the matter up in no party spirit, for we asked these very men to subscribe and take part with us. If they fight on, a terrible responsibility will rest on them, for they have now had proof piled on proof that in their discontent they are a mere fraction of the Church. Take this demonstration in connection with the fact that it comes after you have been with us five years, and immediately after they have done all that lies in their power to unsettle the Church, and you cannot attach too much importance to it. You are certainly bound to us, and if we could appeal to the honour of these men, they are bound to go."

CHAPTER XII.

DISTURBANCE.

In pledging myself to remain at Langton, I think that I am entitled to honesty of purpose. For I had never yet sought any other position, and therefore it was not a necessity. Then again, if from £270 the pew rents had increased to £342, yet no one can say that the income was worth the incessant anxiety, or that it was too much for a congregation who occupied all the pews and most of the seats in a chapel which accommodated 1,200 people, and which consequently involved incessant toil. And last but not least, whilst I never anticipated what befel me, I knew well that the furnace was to be heated seven times hotter than its wont, and that if the active bitterness of a few malcontents, who had as their patron a man in Mr. Teazer's position, who, as deacon, treasurer, Sunday school superintendent and all the rest of it, could help and lend weight to them in all they did, as well as do very much himself, could weary and torment me beyond power of bearing it, that would be done. It is true, they were very few, and in years had not increased, but I was not blind to the power which Mr. Teazer

could exert, if he once became utterly reckless. Not only were many persons under obligations to him, and others under the spell of his drawing-room, but his manner might have deceived the very elect. He is one of those men who live a dual life, a life almost attractive to those who know it little, and who see no deeper than the surface; but a life which when well known proves only hollowness, heartlessness, vanity, and worldliness in its worst forms. But if it could be effected, I could see that I was to be removed quietly, and that as few persons as possible were to suspect Mr. Teazer of laying violent hands upon me, or even of being mixed up with anything so disgraceful. I was to go, but quite religiously on all hands, with the testimonial which usually accompanies a dismissal in our churches, and which too many ministers are tempted, for the sake of appearance, to acquiesce in.

Although this could only be brought about by dastardly and guilty means, the means were freely used. The extraordinary ingenuity and untiring perseverance which these men displayed in circulating reports amazed me. If I had not discovered how useless it was correcting false impressions, my time would have been fully occupied in going from house to house to state the truth. The insinuations and subtle methods of giving pain and seeking to damage my reputation were exhaustless. If I went to London it was to break off an engagement with a young lady whom I was heartlessly abandoning because she was penniless. Of course, the name of the

lady was unknown, and London did for her residence very well. On my two former colleagues uniting with the Church of England, it was suddenly remembered that I had been very friendly with them, that I had taken a deep interest in the testimonials presented to them, and that I was still in communication with them, all of which, with much beside that "could not be yet revealed," was proof enough that I knew of their intention, and that at heart I was a traitor to Independency. If the prosperous state of the congregation compared with former years was mentioned, it was easily explained away by the organ, although Mr. Teazer, who was treasurer, knew well that the largest increase to the pew-rents was the year previous to its erection, and that we had never so much as performed a chant or an anthem. All at once he and his friends became zealous about the schools; and as Mr. Teazer was superintendent of one of them, it was easy to eliminate any teacher who showed too much affection for me, and to introduce the sons and daughters of his friends, and it was quite as easy to shut the door of its council upon me. If, by any chance, the other deacons were absent on the Sabbath, this was a good opportunity and one which he never omitted to seize, to leave me in the vestry alone, thus letting his friends see that as he did not care for me, they could best oblige him by a similar absence of affection.

All I did, as may be imagined, unchristianised me. Mr. Madden had taken it into his head, since the

second election of deacons, to pass me occasionally without any recognition, and when at last I took him at his word and refused to be publicly insulted, it proved a vindictive spirit in me. When I saw Mr. Teazer showing what I thought to be great carelessness in accommodating people with seats and marked negligence to new comers, and gave him a hint, I thereby showed that I preached for "filthy lucre." When, on being attacked in an insinuating speech by Mr. Badfield, which was full of covert charges, I gave it a decided answer, thereby exposing him, I only showed how wanting I was in "Christian meekness." As no one can compute what are the givings of a minister in a large town, it was easy to say that I was illiberal, but the men who said this knew that I gave my share to every collection, every subscription, and every institution in connection with the place. When I preached from such texts as, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," or, "They watched him whether He would heal him on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse Him," or, "They platted a crown of thorns and put it upon His head," I gave clear evidence that I could not keep my evil spirit out of the pulpit. If the sermon bore on slander, lying, or backbiting, I was judged guilty of betraying the cross to gratify myself by being personal; albeit, I would have scorned to use the pulpit for such a purpose, and not rarely have been compelled to leave sermons unpreached or half finished because it was impossible to do justice to the text without giving the

appearance of it. Their ardour never flagged. They meant to succeed, and unquestionably, to a great extent, they did. If they had simply caused me some gigantic difficulty, now and again, I should have had an easy life, but they knew better, and so they made the annoyance daily. No man feels very comfortable when wasps are creeping about him, and I did not. I never felt safe, and never knew what to expect; I should be ashamed to state the nature of many of my trials, and, if I felt disposed, space would fail me. My nights were often sleeplesss for a week together. If a man wishes to be regarded as a hero or a martyr in the Church, he must go and live in Africa or on some of the Polynesian Islands, but I have experienced enough to believe that such heroism and martyrdom are often infinitely outweighed by men of whom the world knows nothing. The modern pastor, in contrast with the apostles, is thought to be quite a fortunate individual. But I believe that there are men who a thousand times sooner would pass through the perils of the sea, bear the darkness of the prison, and even bend the back to the lash than put up with the exquisite torture and humiliations which many unchristian men in Christian Churches prepare for them. For, after all, there was a romance, a freedom, and an adventure in the life of the apostles, of which the home pastor of to-day knows nothing. Many will laugh at this, and even some ministers will smile at it, and I rejoice that they will, for happily they are only a

few who daily fight with beasts in a modern Ephesus. The bulk of our churches seek the happiness of their minister. Few men would have been happier than myself, had it not been for the handful of men with whom the reader is now acquainted, and who are chiefly introduced in the hope of being lessened in numbers elsewhere.

But let it not be imagined that I lacked happiness. At the earnest solicitations of friends, I had occasionally appealed to the press, and the verdict pronounced was a source of such rare gratification and real joy as only young authors can experience. On one occasion I published about half the sermons which I had preached in a single year, and the result was almost as great a surprise as it was a rich satisfaction. But I owed this to my tormentors, for had they not so persistently sought to damage my ministry with persons who were not in a position to judge for themselves, and shown such an undisguised desire to under-value all I said, I should probably have never appealed to the highest tribunal. If I had needed any proof that my chapel critics were as ignorant and brainless as they were undevout, it was certainly established beyond doubt.

And the joy of doing good had never failed me. I never had the remotest belief that the results of my ministry were any measurement of my intellectual or moral worth; for I know that hundreds of the Master's greatest and truest workmen will never find their joy and crown of rejoicing till the results of earth's labours

are summed up by the Lord of the vineyard; whilst as many will then be denounced for their unfaithfulness who have cast out devils and have done all manner of wonders; but in the consciousness that I was helping men, women, and children in the better life, I found greater joy than the miser can find in his gold, the artist in the pictures which immortalize his genius, or the man of science in the revelations which break upon him and make him nature's prophet and apostle. Perhaps, if I had endured no suffering, I should never have known this joy, for the balance is held more evenly by Him who weighs out the elements of our pain and pleasure than we dream.

And then there was the consciousness that I was where duty called me by the voice of the people and by the work achieved; and this cannot fail in its sustaining and helping power. The everlasting arms would fail to uphold men, if the conviction of being where duty called, failed. Whoever fights for self-aggrandisement, for fame, for greed, can have neither balm for his wounds, nor compensation for his defeats. But let the attack be borne for the kingdom of Heaven's sake, and if there is sorrow there shall also be rejoicing. Our Lord's Benediction crowns such an one with the triple crown of his own blessedness, greatness, and glory.

Last, but not least, I found myself one day avowing my love and having it accepted; and from that charmed hour a magic joy which thrills and electrifies both body and soul belonged to me.

But now, for the first time, I felt that I must say farewell to Langton. For if duty had kept me, duty seemed now to call me. How could I bring a wife to bear what I was bearing? Immediately I let my deacons know what I felt, at the same time, however, suggesting that I would put off my marriage for twelve months, and during that interval share in the responsibility of adopting methods to place the Church in a healthier and stronger position, for I could not bear to run away from the difficulty, or leave others to fight out what I was afraid to grapple with myself. But so earnestly did they plead with me to remain, and so strongly did they put the claims of the Church before me, that I laid the whole case before my wife-elect: her heart was as brave as mine had ever been; not only was she willing, but under the circumstances entreated me to remain. We little knew for what we were preparing, but when the storm burst in its fury, her heart never quailed, and when all seemed hopeless chaos she whispered the assurance that it was God's own way of shaping order, working beauty, and laying the foundation of strength and righteousness.

For at last these men had the opportunity for which they had for years waited in vain. Mr. Alder's son applied to me for church membership, and when I mentioned it at the deacons' meeting no objection was raised. When, however, at the Church meeting, I was about to propose him, Mr. Teazer requested me not to do so, and in explanation at the close of the service

laid the charge of habitual swearing against the young man. No one knew better than Mr. Teazer that this was the right time to strike a cruel blow at Mr. Alder. For it was no secret that the savings of many years, amounting to some thousands of pounds, were jeopardised, and that the probability was, that the brave struggle he was waging would be in vain. And, therefore, I confess that the way and manner in which Mr. Teazer laid the charge filled me with indignation. This blow, as I anticipated, all but killed Mr. Alder, for it fell upon him suddenly and unexpectedly, and touched a place where he could feel most keenly. But on investigation, he did not believe the accusation, nor did I. At his request, I asked Mr. Teazer to let me have the names of the persons who could substantiate the charge in writing. Some think that this was a mistake, that I ought to have been content with asking for the names. If it was a mistake, there were two things in its extenuation. First: I did it at the request of the man who was most concerned, and whom I believed to be struck at by a coward; and, in the next place, I believed it would establish a salutary rule and prevent so much slander. And, if I made a mistake, Mr. Teazer proved only too fully that he could use it, and meant to do so. Not only did he refuse to give the names in writing, but he never offered to let me have them in any other way. In a private conference with two of the deacons he mentioned the names of witnesses ready to substantiate his charge, but when he called on me

he only lost the control of his temper, becoming course, vulgar, and abusive in the extreme; and the deacons regarding his interview with them as private, and, moreover, holding that he himself, and not they, ought to let me have them, never gave them to me. Again, if I had made a mistake, the proper place to correct it was at the next deacons' meeting. Mr. Teazer by absenting himself from this meeting as he did, and, notwithstanding a denial made for him, by holding, as a gentleman invited told me, a conclave of the malcontents the next night in the back parlour of his shop, let it appear distinctly enough that correcting his minister's mistake was not half as dear to him as using it as a weapon to smite with. The report of the parlour conclave was fully confirmed at the Church meeting. Certain persons were there in full force, and immediately I proposed visitors to see Mr. Alder, jun., Mr. Teazer made an attack upon me, and then gave way for Mr. Cockle to propose and Mr. Badfield to second a resolution, for a committee "to investigate the whole field." The Church had been taken unawares, but their resolution had only seven votes.

At the next Church meeting, upwards of 200 persons were present, and from the report of the visitors it appeared that the witnesses were three young men; that they never attempted to substantiate any charge of habitual swearing; and that, in the one single case to which they confined their testimony, they had each a somewhat different version. On the other hand, the

young men with whom Thomas Alder associated and played cricket, came forward almost in a body to bear testimony to the purity of his language and his life. Hence, out of the large Church meeting, not more than eight hands were held up against him, and these would have been lifted against him under any circumstances.

What were we to do now? Mr. Teazer had counted on carrying the Church against Mr. Alder's son, but chiefly against the diaconate and pastor, and had failed; but I felt that this was our opportunity for being magnanimous, and that such a course might not only save the Church, but save Mr. Teazer also. Accordingly, I called upon him and asked him if he would meet his brother deacons at my house; I told him that I had not as yet consulted with them, but believed they would gladly meet him and let the past be entirely forgotten; that I was far from wishing any patch-up, and believed that there was the opportunity for a display of Christian feeling on all sides, which would enable us henceforth to be worthier of our position, and that this might be brought about without any sacrifice of self-respect on the part of any one. After I had urged the matter, he said, he would think it over; but in a very short time sent me a curt note declining the invitation. I then told Mr. Alder what I had done, and to my inexpressible gratification found that he was not merely willing to meet Mr. Teazer, but, for the sake of the Master and all that it involved, to

make another effort to bring about the meeting I had suggested; hence, I proposed that Messrs. McGavin and Passmore should be a deputation to him, and they consented to act. The answer they received was precisely what had been given to me. We soon discovered the cause.

It was industriously circulated that two lads had seen Thomas Alder with a girl of ill-fame. When I found that one of these youths was the relative of a family whom I knew to be under obligation to Mr. Teazer, and that neither of them were over seventeen, I confess to having had painful suspicions. This was increased by my examination of them, for one of them talked with a fluency and immodesty about women which compelled me several times to call him to order. On the other hand, not only did Thomas Alder most emphatically deny the allegation, but an independent member of the Church volunteered the evidence that she saw him on his way home at an hour which made the thing incredible; and this testimony exactly harmonised with the statement of his father and mother as to the hour when he arrived at home. Amid all this, his father's health was rapidly failing. He was no weakling to succumb before a difficulty; I have known few stronger men; but the battles of the days and the sleeplessness of the nights had begun to tell upon him fearfully. I would as soon have parted with my right arm as broken to him the intelligence of this new charge against his son; but I felt that he might have

facts which would throw light on the night when his son was said to have been "the prodigal." And I was right in my surmise, but never can I forget that interview. Mr. McGavin was with me and this new trouble bound us closer together by hallowed intercourse, by the melting of our hearts in tears, by profound emotion, and by prayer which made God very near and very real to us.

As I expected, the matter was brought on at the next Church meeting; Mr. Rowdyson, being the spokesman, gave it all emphasis and dwelt upon it at sufficient length. Before it had been proved or could be, the charge was assumed, the enormity of the guilt and its corrupt influence in the Church was dwelt upon, as though the lad were a sinner above all sinners, and we his abettors and participators. Mr. McGavin then stated the precarious condition in which the lad's father, his fellow deacon was lying, and by recalling the scene we had just left entreated consideration. But it was all in vain. Mr. Rowdyson spoke again about the purity of the Church, and again assumed what he knew to be false, the immorality of Thomas Alder.

The lad resigned. He had offered to facilitate the most searching examination into the case, and for his own sake it was his interest still to demand it, but as he could see that this would only expose the Church to the agitating and disturbing elements which were at work he magnanimously chose to retire.

During the ensuing month Mr. Teazer and his party held their meetings very frequently, as, indeed, they had done for some time past. As all had failed, there was only one opportunity left, and that was Mr. Teazer's resignation. Again and again, I heard during the month that it was to be an attack upon me, and the joint production of his party. After it had been formally decided upon, letters of invitation to attend a large private meeting of all their friends, and any others whom it was considered possible to influence, were issued. I rejoice to say that beyond the usual deacons' meeting we held no other of any kind whatever; nor as yet had the Church in any manner organized itself against these plots.

At the next Church meeting, therefore, we were at an immense disadvantage. A glance round made it perfectly clear that the meeting was to be altogether exceptional. Many were present whom I had never seen at a Church meeting before, and as I knew that they could only be acquainted with the case as repeated at the private meetings, they would necessarily be prejudiced. On the other hand, not a few were absent whom it would have needed but a word from us to have brought. To this meeting, I read Mr. Teazer's resignation, which I can scarcely characterise better than by saying that it was worthy of the occasion. That not a word might be lost, Mr. Madden was entrusted with a copy, which he carefully scrutinised as I read the original. If I had omitted a sentence, however

insulting to myself, I can imagine the interruption to which I should have been subject, but as I read it faithfully, Mr. Madden was assailed by whispers of "Shame" from many who sat near him. Before Mr. Passmore, who had intended proposing the acceptance of Mr. Teazer's resignation had the opportunity, a person whom Mr. Teazer had linked with him in the Sabbath school, and who was ready on all occasions to obey, proposed that a committee be appointed to examine the cause of Mr. Teazer's resignation, and this was seconded by Mr. Rowdyson's son-in-law. It was then spoken to by the whole party of whom Mr. Teazer was the centre. Their object was evidently to storm the meeting and carry the resolution, if that were possible, at any sacrifice. Nothing could have been made more clear than that Mr. Teazer's resignation was to be the cause of fresh agitation, and that the new battle ground was the last upon which they could ever hope to fight; and hence they were at once subtle and reckless. Personally, I never experienced so much insolence, or witnessed such a display of bitterness in my life, whilst the people gradually left the meeting, shocked and distressed. A statement made by Mr. McGavin and confirmed by his fellow deacon, Mr. Passmore, concerning language of Mr. Teazer's, was denounced by Mr. Badfield as "a prevarication." Mr. Madden thought proper to put me through a cross examination, as to Mr. Teazer's behaviour in a scene which has already been sketched,

and then gave a false version. Fortunately, however, for me, one of the deacons was present who was present on that occasion also, and he rose and confirmed in the public meeting the statement I had made. The gravest charge which Mr. Cockle could bring against me was 'sensitiveness to the prerogatives of my office,' but such was the violence with which he spoke, and such the unseemliness with which he pointed his finger, that I was compelled to ask if this was to be allowed, and on obtaining an unmistakeable majority, he resigned and left the room. But the purpose of all these speeches was at any rate in part realized, for a mere fraction of the meeting was left, and it was now half-past ten o'clock. Whether the motion was carried by this meeting for the committee or not I cannot say; so shocked was I, by what I had seen and heard, that I was conscious of nothing but an awful pain. But I remember asking for another show of hands that I might count, when a resolution was proposed, seconded, and carried unanimously that the meeting be adjourned to that day week. At the close of this meeting I could scarcely believe the interpretation of my own senses.

Mr. McGavin accompanied me home and remained with me till early the next morning.

"Well, what is to be done now Mr. McGavin," I asked?

"We must take the vote at the next Church meeting; of course this motion will be entirely negatived."

"I am convinced that it would be if it was taken in a full meeting. But you saw the tactics they employed to-night. They spoke against time, and they flung insult about till the meeting was almost entirely their own, and they will do that again. And how could we expect the people to stay amid it all? We cannot ask them, and if at this stage we pass a resolution to close the meeting at nine o'clock, they will move for adjournments, and multiplied meetings will operate as disastrously as prolonged ones. I cannot stay. As long as there was any difficulty I could bear it, but I cannot match the weapons these men are using now. Besides, if they had not a majority to-night they were not far short, and if it was not a representation of the Church and was dishonestly obtained, still there it was, and I cannot, therefore, bring myself to continue longer."

"It is very sad Mr. Wilkinson, very sad, and we have no right to think of ourselves any longer. We must think of you now. You have stayed for our sake, but for yours we must, at last, let you go. I could not and would not see you again in the position you were to-night. But it will be a terrible thing for the Church if these men succeed. I cannot bear the thought of their triumphing, and yet it seems as though, after all, they would. You see everything favours them."

"Yes, I see that all things are apparently working ehalf. Mr. Alder lying on his bed with

broken health is as much their gain as the loss of the Church. Passmore and Penser are good men, but they are too timid for the occasion. We could scarce have better helpers for time of peace, but it is not their nature to breast such a hurricane as this, and it is clear that these men will hesitate at nothing."

"They are unscrupulous, and whatever will help their cause I expect to see adopted. You must expect no consideration, you must not expect justice, Mr. Wilkinson, if you stay; and that reconciles me to the thought of separation. You will have difficulties anywhere, but you can never have men of such low nature to deal with. Much as I have seen of Churches, I could not have believed that there was a Church in which the same number of them could have met together. Your going will be your freedom, Mr. Wilkinson; you cannot get worse off, you are almost sure to do very much better; we shall be the losers."

"I confess, Mr. McGavin, I feel a great relief in your candour. I shall not decide entirely, however, till I have endeavoured to get the other deacons to the same resolution."

Such was the gist of a conversation on that never-to-be-forgotten night. We parted; neither of us, however, to sleep. Through the long and dreary hours I paced up and down my room, seeking such relief as the God of consolation alone can give; for the hard manner and the reckless sayings of these men,—their success, notwithstanding what I had for years endured,—

together with the thought of separation from a people amidst whom I had worked in a work which makes many and sacred ties, filled me with a sadness such as I have rarely experienced. By six o'clock in the morning Mr. McGavin was with me again, and at ten o'clock once more. We saw Mr. Alder, who was not only quite willing to acquiesce in the step I contemplated, but saw no other alternative. "I am no use to you at present," he said. "How much I grieve for you and the Church I cannot tell, but it is all that I can do."

Mr. McGavin had my authority, therefore, for telling Mr. Teazer, that as I saw nothing but strife for the Church and wished to serve it, he was at liberty to withdraw his resignation, as I intended to offer mine at the adjourned meeting on the following week. Mr. Teazer's satisfaction was supreme. He gave Mr. McGavin the assurance that he would suggest and subscribe to a testimonial, and he immediately sent in to me a letter of "sincere sympathy," from both of which I need scarcely say I shrank back. On meeting me a day or two after, he came up to me with one of the blandest of smiles, and with an outstretched hand, which I confess I did not take. This may have been wrong, but the thought that this man only offered me his hand because he had accomplished his purpose, and because, after tormenting me for years, he wished the town to believe that he had been my friend, was too strong to admit of it. The man never seemed to me

more repugnant than he did that morning with his smile and assumed cordiality.

Before the approaching meeting, the deacons and myself all united in one common sorrow. It is difficult to say to whom the separation seemed the hardest. We had all to nerve ourselves for the occasion.

We found the room crowded, and, as I heard afterwards, the people had come with the determination that neither "protraction" nor "violence" should drive them away. My announced resignation took them entirely by surprise, and throughout the meeting, with very few exceptions, there was a sorrow which was both audible and visible. At the close, I was surrounded by group after group of friends entreating me to reverse my conclusion, till the deacons, seeing how needful it was, accompanied me home. As Mr. Madden left the room, he was overheard to whisper to Mr. Badfield, "Has it not answered beautifully?" "Hush!" was the reply. There was need of that word from Mr. Badfield, for a lady was just laying her hand on his shoulder and beginning to say, "And this Mr. Badfield is due to you, and such as you. Why do you not leave us in peace." "Mrs. Cameron," he answered, "I don't mean to leave and nobody shall make or induce me!"

CHAPTER XIII.

EXPULSION.

IMMEDIATELY after giving notice of my intended resignation, I left the town. The sense of freedom which now belonged to me is indescribable. No slave with the gash of his master's whip yet sore in his back, but with his feet at last on British soil, no innocent prisoner with the verdict which frees him from all tarnish on his reputation, ever breathed freer than I did. It was like another life with which I woke up, or rather like another world in which I moved, and where I was free from dangers, which in my former state hung over me night and day. But the sense of deliverance in which I exulted was not unmixed with what is galling. A freed slave may have the bitter thought that a brother or a sister is yet at the tyrant's mercy, and the acquitted prisoner may have to carry about the feeling that he was the victim of a base plot; and I had both these experiences. For the Church, I grieved deeply. It would now be under the rule of men whom, I believed, sought nothing so much as their own, and who, because of their first success, would be arrogant to its next minister beyond all that they had

ever been. And that I was driven from my position by the unprincipled manœuvring of these men, I did not and could not doubt; and I confess, the consciousness rankled. If a majority of the Church had ever suggested or given the slightest indication in any way that they would like a change, I should have accepted their verdict joyfully. A minister who stays amongst a people who do not desire him, must have lost all self-respect, and deserves only to be scorned; but the very nature which would make him too proud to stay with a Church under such circumstances, would make him rebel against the success of half-a-dozen men who ignored both the rights of the Church and the pastor; and so did I.

Whilst I was meditating, however, the Church was acting. When I returned home, I found that for that very night a meeting of all its members was called to take steps for retaining me; and about nine o'clock on the same evening a deputation of gentlemen, representing all the distinct classes of the Church, waited upon and informed me that a resolution had just been passed entreating me to remain; that to secure a fair representation and result, all without exception had been invited; that about 250 out of the now 338 members had responded; and that an amendment by Mr. Rowdyson that, "there be first a committee to inquire into the cause of Mr. Teazer's resignation," had not a dozen votes. They also informed me that they had beforehand seen all the leading members of the con-

gregation who quite acquiesced in the steps they were about to take. For the present, I reserved my decision.

Upon inquiry, I discovered that Mr. Allerton had waited upon Mr. Teazer during my absence to see if a reconciliation could not be brought about, but that the Head of the Church had refused anything approaching to it. It appears that Mr. Allerton had then informed him that, probably, in that case, the Church might take other steps; whereupon, and in order to prevent this, Mr. Teazer informed him that it would be no use, for, said he, "Mr. Wilkinson has had no peace for three years, and I pledge my word and honour to you as a gentleman, that if he remains he shall have none." It also came out that Mr. Rowdyson had declared something to the same effect to several members, and that as long as three years ago, Mr. Madden had assured a gentleman in the Church that he "would never rest till Mr. Wilkinson was rooted out." The result of Mr. Teazer's speech was the formation of a committee of gentlemen, few of whom as yet had taken any active part in Church matters, though several were amongst the oldest members of the Church, and all most constant in their attachment to its interest. Their first effort was to get to know the worst which Mr. Teazer could allege, in case there might be anything which it was desirable to know, and to this end they appointed Messrs. Gallantly, Allerton, and Dauntless to wait upon him. Mr. Teazer began just as they could have wished, by asking them if they knew "the

history of which this was the culmination." After hearing his story from beginning to end and asking him if there was nothing else, they did not hesitate to tell him that they regarded his conduct as unjustifiable; and upon Mr. Allerton reminding him of what he had said, namely, that "Mr. Wilkinson had had no peace for three years, and that he pledged his word and honour as a gentleman, that he should have none if he stayed," all that he could do was to substitute the word "comfort" for "peace." Although these gentlemen had hitherto been almost silent spectators, they could be so no longer. Hence, the meeting of which I have spoken.

My reply to the deputation was in writing, and was in effect, that if anything could be done to secure to the Church harmony and healthiness of action, I would stay.

It now oozed out that six gentlemen were to be relieved of their membership. Was it possible? Instead of being the rulers of the Church, were they to be cast out and disowned by it? Were they to fall into the very pit which they had dug for their minister? Not if they could prevent it, and nothing was left undone. First of all, their sons were prompted to the holding of a young men's meeting, and after a preliminary organization when it was decided to uphold the hands of their sires and create a reaction, the meeting was called. To their utter dismay it ended in a resolution which designated these men "as certain

persons who had created so much disturbance," and pledging itself to uphold the pastor. The next thing was to work upon the leaders of the committee, whose names have been given. Mr. Teazer accordingly increased very considerably his life-policy at the office of Mr. Allerton, and Mr. Rowdyson called upon him and did all that flattery and cajolery, and, at last, all that threatening could do; the proper person was appointed to see Mr. Dauntless, who can give an amusing enough description of the various methods by which he was assailed; Mr. Gallantly was too much above them in position to deal with very well, and if he had not been they would have found a high minded man and one much too firm for any influence which did not appeal to his honour.

As none of the deacons were invited to the committee meetings, and as I too was excluded, it was only a day or two previous to the Church meeting that I knew precisely what was to be done. Mr. Allerton called to ask me to go with him to see a young man who was not expected to live long. Under any circumstances it would have been hard to lose him, for he had spent nearly twenty years of a young life as a teacher in a Ragged School, and was ever one of my best friends, but it was very very hard to part with him just now, and that seemed inevitable. The sympathy which this man, who knew that he was dying, gave to me, the anxiety which he displayed to know what the committee had resolved on, his real grief that he could not be at

the meeting to uphold them, and the unmistakeable pity and sorrow he felt that these men should have harassed and annoyed the Church so long, made me feel that what was to be done was, at any rate, hallowed by the prayers and support of one of the devoutest men, in the most solemn hour of his being. After we left him, Mr. Allerton said, "Before long, Mr. Wilkinson, one of your warmest friends, will be in heaven, and what we are about to do will have his benediction resting on it. It was resolved, as you would gather, that six men are to be removed from the Church books, and about the men on whom to exercise discipline there was never any doubt, but we carefully discussed each name before we resolved to bring it forward, and I shall never forget the debate on Mr. Teazer's name, for Henry had been standing with his arm on the mantelpiece, when suddenly turning round with all his ardour he said, "Yes, put him down, he is the worst; and there can be no peace for the Church whilst he is in it."

When the Church meeting assembled there could be no doubt about the resolution. It moved that Messrs. Teazer, Rodwyson, Madden, Badfield, Hale, and another be relieved of their membership. It was proposed by Mr. Gallantly, and seconded by Mr. Allerton. Then each of the men who had been called to the bar was allowed to plead his own cause before a meeting to which they had summoned all their strength, and for which they had canvassed night and day. There can be no question about the tact which these speakers

displayed. Each pleaded for the other rather than for himself; if there was a grey hair, it was dwelt upon pathetically enough, and whatever any of them had done for the Church was recalled and put in its most favourable aspect. Mr. Teazer had been reminded by Mr. Allerton of what he had said in the presence of two witnesses, namely, that I had enjoyed no comfort for three years, and should have none if I remained, but he very adroitly made no allusion to it whatever, and dwelt upon the Church being "a family," and upon "the duty of loving each other." To my amazement, the others, one and all, declared that they had nothing whatever against me, and would not for the world do anything to injure me; indeed, some of them paid me the greatest compliments that a minister can receive. All that they desired, they pleaded, was to be allowed to continue in a Church in which they hoped to co-operate in work for many happy years to come.

For two reasons I gave no reply. First of all, I knew that if I brought the charges which I could bring, they would grow violent and in a few minutes disperse the meeting or make it a topic for scandal. And in the next place, I did not wish the Church to take this step for my sake, but for its own, and, therefore, I ran the risk of allowing the Church to suppose that they had been as gracious to me as they had represented themselves and that their version was the correct one.

How little need there was for me to say anything,

the vote declared. The hands held up against them cannot have been less than nine or ten to one, and this majority included every age and condition of the Church. Old men who were fighting the last battle for the Church militant, and young men who had just joined the ranks and were full of their first enthusiasm, alike lifted up their hands. If members of twenty, of thirty, of forty, or of fifty years of age had been the jury, the verdict would have been the same. No qualification of voters could have made it other.

Most men would have accepted such a conclusion, but it is only doing these men justice to say that they were not ordinary men, and not to be measured by the ordinary rule. Their object was now to get the interference of other Churches, or, if not, to drag the Church which had exercised discipline upon them through the gutters, so that the Church might be disgraced, and they might be regarded as persecuted champions of truth and purity. There was, no doubt, another motive, namely, to harass and weary me into retiring from the contest. For the pages of a newspaper now became their weapon. The most important journal, in all respects, which Langton possesses, refused their contributions, but we have a newspaper which was after their own heart for the purpose, inasmuch as its reputation for this sort of thing was fully made, and it depended upon scandal and sensation for its existence. Report said that it was in the Roman Catholic interest, but the only foundation for such a belief was, that it

had vilified, at one time or another, some minister or congregation in connection with every other denomination. But this mattered not. They said in its pages all they desired; dirt was flung freely by them, and lying was indulged in yet more freely. Copies of this production were extensively distributed by them, and in reply to one of them, Mr. Teazer received the following note, as the writer himself has informed me.*

"DEAR MR. TEAZER,—I know nothing of the circumstances, nor do I know who the expelled members are, but will you kindly tell the person who has written this, that if it would suit his purpose, he would not hesitate to cut his own father's throat.

"Yours truly," etc., etc.

But the resources of these expelled members were not by any means exhausted. A petition was now set on foot, praying the Church to re-instate them, by rescinding the minutes at the next meeting. The chief actors in this movement were Mr. Rowdyson's son-in-law, and a person who, it was believed, was hired, inasmuch as he could not otherwise afford his time, had been in the habit of attending chapel about once a month, but had never taken part in any work, or even hitherto attended a Church meeting during the six years of my pastorate; they had occasional helpers, but the work fell chiefly on the shoulders of these two.

* This is the only document referred to in these pages which is not in the author's possession.

Before they had gone very far, a young woman came to me, in presence of one of the deacons, to say that she desired her name to be taken off the petition, as she had been surrounded by three men for upwards of an hour, and had signed against her will; also a young man who had just commenced business, declaring that, on refusing to sign, they assured him that it was so little against me, that Mr. Bonnie, one of my friends, had signed; that, on still refusing, they had offered to buy goods which he declined to sell, and that he had since seen Mr. Bonnie who altogether denied having signed. My friends, I discovered, were told that it was in my favour, for if they did not get a majority, someone would propose *my* expulsion at a thin meeting! Old people were plagued hour after hour. Special attention was paid to persons who knew nothing of church matters, by reason of living at a distance and never attending the meetings. In short, the lowest electioneering tactics were employed. The references which, on all hands, they were obliged at this stage of their proceedings to make to me, constituted the highest compliment which I have ever had paid to me in my life, or ever can hope for. My surprise is, that they did not get the signature of almost every individual. They reported that 127 had signed, but I cannot say, for none of us were ever allowed to see the document. It answered a purpose, however; it kept the Church in agitation, and the officers, of course, had all to lose, whilst the disturbers had all to gain.

Whilst his son-in-law was canvassing, Mr. Rowdyson was also busily engaged himself. He had written to the three previous ministers of the Church, asking each one whether he had been driven away by the expelled members. Mr. Rowdyson had many a time spoken altogether undisguisedly in slighting terms of all my predecessors. Thus, in speaking of Dr. Clapton, he would say, "if he is one of our big men I don't know them," or "every one knows that his work on 'Adaptation' was only a plagiarism of Dr. Leicester's," or "I often had to complain to him of his preaching," or "he owes everything to his prudence;" and it seemed impossible for him to speak of Mr. Real without remarking that he had never been in favour of him, that he never did anything, that he lived upon his father's name, and that he went just in time to save himself. He addressed them, however, on this occasion as ministers whom the Church had experienced the privilege of hearing! The letter accomplished its purpose and brought back replies to the effect that they had not been driven away. The whole correspondence, therefore, was printed, and a copy sent immediately to every member of the Church. No effect whatever was produced. Mr. Rowdyson, it was at once seen, had not put the proper case before them. The question before the Church was not what had he and his friends been, but what were they now? There was a time when all drunkards were sober men, and most thieves were once honest; and this seems to have occurred to most of the

people. And then it was naturally asked, "Why has he not written to Mr. Davids? Whatever they were to others, we do know that they drove him away, and it cannot have been his fault, for he is now over the same Church to which he went, and has gradually become one of the most important and influential men in the county, whilst they are again breaking up the Church, and pursuing in all respects the same tactics."

Now, inasmuch as that rupture, and all that Mr. Davids had passed through, was known to my predecessors, I hold, and am certain that the bulk of my brethren will agree with me, that they were bound either to remain silent, or before speaking to make a thorough and impartial investigation of the matter. What is the fact? They wrote without seeking any other information than that furnished by Mr. Rowdyson's letter to them; certainly, they never corresponded with the pastor or the deacons. But to neither Messrs. Carlson or Real do I attribute any unbrotherly intention whatever. They acted thoughtlessly, and I am glad to say that I believe this to be the worst concerning them. They both, too, refrained from passing a verdict on what they were unable to decide, which, at least, was fair. Dr. Clapton's letter, I regret to say, admitted of no such explanation. It pronounced judgment, although no materials for a righteous judgment were in his possession. It was also impossible not to look upon this letter in connection with the past. At the time of my coming to

Langton, Dr. Clapton professed much friendly feeling towards me, and yet, when he had a secret opportunity of helping me, he hinted to a member of the congregation that I was scarcely the man for the place. Of course, he had a perfect right to say this, and I hope I had sufficient dignity to treat it with perfect indifference, especially as I have never been modest enough to regard Dr. Clapton as in any respect my superior; but viewed in connection with letters addressed to me and private conversation, I felt that it was dishonest and dishonourable. I cannot deny that I was influenced towards him accordingly. After a lapse of five years, a term sufficiently long to be a test, my success was proved to be equal to his own, if the size of the congregation, its importance, and generosity, are to be regarded as criteria; and in an interview with me he acknowledged this, remarking that the people had heaped greater honours upon me than they had ever done upon him, whilst in explanation of the past he assured me that he had been altogether misrepresented, that what he meant was, "that there were peculiar elements in the Church," and he added, "I walked over an earthquake myself more than once." I was not fully satisfied, but I asked him to occupy my pulpit as a token of good-will, and repeated the request on several distinct occasions afterwards. Not many months after this, he wrote the letter in answer to Mr. Rowdyson's! I could scarcely believe my own eyes, and immediately wrote to him, reminding him of what he had said. He

replied, that the earthquake to which he referred was an election of deacons eighteen years ago! In my rejoinder, I reminded him, that at the time of his using the language we were talking about the Church as it is, not as it was eighteen years ago, that he was explaining what he had said at the time of my settlement, that the reference to the past was simply incidental and in illustration of the present, and that it was *impossible* for him to refer exclusively to any combustible elements that might have been in the Church eighteen years ago. His reply shirked the whole question, and is as loud a condemnation of the man as can be written, for it is full of that evasion which proves consciousness of inconsistency without the desire to rectify it. I have kept all Dr. Clapton's letters, and copies of all my replies, and after just reading them am filled with renewed astonishment, and certainly do not envy the author. Even taken at his own word, and with his own explanation, self-evidently forced and bad as it is, his position is far from creditable. For if he had been rightminded, the fact of his having passed over an earthquake himself, would have made him sympathetic towards his successor, and anything but eager to enlist himself on the side of the elements of disturbance. To take this side without seeking to know the other, and simply on the showing of a letter from Mr. Rowdyson, who he knew had acted heartlessly towards another of his successors, adds flagrant injustice to his want of generosity. Besides, in his letter

to me, he owns that all the men whom we expelled were not in the Church when he was the pastor, which of course makes his judgment additionally unrighteous.

I will not pause to remark on other inconsistencies, such as that in his letter to Mr. Rowdyson in which he says he "was the friend of all," whilst in writing to me he owns that he "passed over an earthquake." I am bound, however, to add, that another of his successors also experienced as disgraceful treatment at his hands as he well could, and that the third, if he does not complain, has cause enough to do so, for to my knowledge Dr. Clapton wrote a letter condemning important Church action which he had endorsed, and did much else of an equally unbrotherly nature. I fully confess that my indignation with this man is very great, for I am assured that I fought a battle before which he would have retired; I know, too, that whatever may be my faults and failings, I was in this instance animated by the most unselfish motives. On all hands I was entreated to make a stand, was told with deep and reiterated earnestness that the Church was now to be saved or lost, and only from a strong conviction that it was so, consented to endure the trial. I had also been influenced not a little by what he had himself confessed, namely, that he had "passed over more than one earthquake." God forbid that I should judge Dr. Clapton in other respects, for to another Master he stands or falls, but I do judge him of having acted meanly and unjustifiably towards more than one

of his successors, if not indeed of having done something towards fomenting mischief, and evidently for nothing save the contemptible ambition of being regarded as the superior man. If the only method by which a minister can keep his name and influence alive is by disparaging his successors, he ought to be willing to let his memory rot for ever. Dr. Clapton would certainly, even from his own stand-point, have been wise in acting the nobler part, for, with few exceptions, his policy is at last seen through by the entire Church and congregation.

The letters of Messrs. Carlson and Real were not regarded so unfavourably, but they failed to modify the feeling of the Church in the slightest degree. No wonder that Mr. Carlson's letter should, for it was twenty years since he had been the pastor of the Church. Only two of the expelled members had at that time been in communion with it, and they were both quite young men. Moreover, during the last year of his pastorate there had been a terrific commotion, which some imagined they might have had more to do with than he was aware of. Mr. Real's letter was read in the light of the following facts. He had only been the pastor of the Church three years, and they had never asked him to continue. Mr. Teazer had declared in the house of an important member of the Church, "the time has come for Mr. Real to go, and if he does not, he must be made," and others knew quite sufficient to confirm this.

If the letters quite failed in creating a reaction, they did good service in being fresh instruments of agitation. We never replied to them, or to any other of their productions. Not a week passed but some vile and lying contribution was put in circulation by them, but we brought ourselves to bear the calumnies for the sake of the Church. Besides, to have replied, would have served their purpose, because it would have kept the matter open. Nothing was a greater grief to me than when I found that others wrote in favour of our action, as both a Churchman, a Wesleyan, and an Independent did.

Amidst all I never doubted for a moment that the right thing had been done. These men had sat upon the breast of the Church like a nightmare. Only nine years ago, and under the pastorate of an almost universally acknowledged able and successful minister, they had almost ruined it; and the people were never free from the thought that what they had done they would not hesitate to do again. Of that they had long given proof. My willingness for their expulsion had originated, in no small degree, in what they had done to unsettle other ministers; but I had both seen and experienced quite enough myself to convince me that they were altogether unfit for Church membership. In the words of Mr. Davids, whose action in the whole matter was that of a man free from resentment towards them, but who was honourable enough to state what was binding on him, "In all my experience of human

nature, I have never known men who can be so compact and heartless in their hostility towards a minister, and I hope that I shall never know their like again." Deacons' meetings were a farce, for Mr. Teazer was present to inform his friends of what we did, although he knew well that he was facilitating plot and stratagem, or absent to put us into a dilemma. For years we thus went on full of unrest, and in terrible suspense. What healthy action could there be in the Church? If discipline is not for such men, for what purpose is it to be reserved? Independency allows individual freedom, and allows, therefore, every member the option of stating in full assembly any personal grievance, or of calling in question the life of any other member, be it even that of the pastor, and allows, I do not hesitate to say, any member or members the option of shewing cause why the minister or deacons should retire; but when a handful of men become nothing so much as disturbers, looking out for opportunities to agitate for mere personal ends, refusing to acquiesce in the will of the majority, however clearly and emphatically that may be demonstrated, and who cannot disguise that although they have no sufficient reasons wherewith to prevail upon the Church, yet that they will give it no peace till their will is law, and who in various ways become obnoxious to the great bulk of their fellow members, they prove themselves unfit for the liberty of a Congregational Church, and, if they do not retire, ought to be expelled. Such men are

as unfit to be in the Church as a drunkard or blasphemer; they certainly do more harm. When the drunkard or the blasphemer indulges in his vice he creates horror in a Christian community, and so is his own corrective, but the serpent-like men who crawl about peering for something to prey upon, and poisoning whatever reputation may be in their way, are sufficiently hypocritical to do everything for the "sake of the cause," and in this proportion are dangerous. Their wickedness can scarcely be transcended sometimes. Take Mr. Teazer as a sample, and can you conceive the devil himself saying anything baser than he did about the happiness of his minister? This man was horrified at the alleged report of a young lad having, in the heat of excitement, uttered a curse. Was he honest? If so, it was because he had seen that it was a custom to eject from the Church its blasphemer, and its custom to allow such men as himself to remain in it; and therefore is it not high time that the evidence of a bad spirit, even in an outwardly respectable man, be made cause of Church discipline? My impression is, that he knew well enough that his sin was the greater, even if the other could be proved, which it never was, but that he never dreamt of the possibility of discipline, and if so, is it not imperative that such men should have precedents put before them? It is certain that such persons keep all the devout and peaceful members of the Church to which they belong in a state of alarm and disquiet; that they torment the minister unless

he lends himself to their purposes; and that in time they make the very name of the Church a bye-word. If Independency did not allow the ejection of such men, I should cease to believe in it, because it would then necessitate many Churches being little else all their history through than scenes of plot and petty squabbling, thereby disgracing the holy name of religion, making it the ridicule of its foes, and the stumbling-block of the most earnest souls yet outside it. But because Independency is self-government based on the spirit and precedents of the New Testament, and because the New Testament demands "order," frowns on the "unruly," requires that the pastors be "esteemed very highly for their works' sake," that the members "be at peace among themselves," and declares that "the mouths of the vain talkers and deceivers who subvert whole houses must be stopped," I believe in Independency. All that we need in order to free our Churches from tyranny within, and from scandal without, is to be fully, what we are not yet sufficiently, Independents. There are not a few Churches which are Independent only in name, so entirely are they overshadowed, or kept in unending strife; and discipline is the only remedy. I would have caution exercised, and I would only resort to discipline as a final weapon. Let conciliation first be used, and let there be long-suffering, and only when charity and forbearance have failed, and when the harmony and well-being of the whole Church is at stake, ought

action to be taken. For discipline to be used as a rod of terror by pastor or deacons, or to be arbitrarily, or capriciously, or in personal spleen employed, would be as disastrous to our Independency as anything that could well be conceived. Of this, however, there is little fear, for there is nothing which a Church is so loth to do as to hold up its hands against one of its members, unless the case very loudly and emphatically calls for it. The extreme to which we have gone has been indulgence to offenders of this class, and there is never very likely to be a great reaction in favour of severity. Ministers and prosperity have alike been sacrificed to them; is it not time that the Church dealt with them as they deserve? But what the Church in its discipline should ever seek, is not the confusion and shame of those who are the subjects of it, but their good. We wished to save those from whom we withdrew ourselves, and therefore whilst we acted firmly we acted with great consideration; our resolution "relieved" them of their membership; and though, in consequence of this, they made fresh ground for abusing us, we have never regretted it. Such discipline would be the health and strength of many Churches, especially if the action were supported by the neighbouring Churches. This reminds me that we had an offer of arbitration, and that the expelled members were as eager to accept it as we were decisive in refusing. Their anxiety gave us no confidence of any happy settlement. For years we had sought to reconcile them in vain.

At the beginning of the last agitation they created, I tried once more, and the deacons joined me, but all to no purpose. Moreover, their conversion to the idea of arbitration was somewhat suspicious. As long as there was the slightest hope of working up a majority we never heard of it. Indeed, their loud boast was, "Thomas Alder's case has given us great power." They had persuaded themselves of this, because they found that I stood by him amid their accusations, and they fancied that the people would believe them Purists, seeking only the holiness of the Church. It is true that they had suggested a committee to consider the cause of Mr. Teazer's resignation. But seeing that he had given his reasons, and had made his resignation as much a bomb-shell as possible, it was rather striking to ask for a committee. Moreover the committee suggested were Messrs. Rowdyson and Moonshine, also two of my friends, and a fifth gentleman who is a good hearted soul, but as fit to conduct an arbitration as to guide the chariot of the sun, and as plastic to Mr. Teazer's influence as clay in the hands of the potter. This committee was seen through too well. Arbitration was never mooted till the Church pronounced against them all, by signs and majorities which could not be mistaken. Their earnestness for it at this stage is not very amazing. Probably there are not very many culprits against whom the jury have decided, and on whom the judge has pronounced a sentence, who would not be perfectly agreeable to have their case sub-

mitted to arbitration. We declined the offer, but as the question is one of growing importance, I must treat of it in another chapter; not only because it is frequently discussed, but because, by certain persons, it is urged upon Churches wherever there is an opening, and the cost of refusal is gradually becoming the rod of persecution. Such is Independency in 1870! There is a strong stand for strong men to make, or what is worthy the name of Independency will soon only exist in shadow.

CHAPTER XIV.

ARBITRATION.

Our refusal of arbitration was not an absolute disownment of the principle, but resulted from a deep conviction that ours was not a legitimate case for it. We felt that we should be responsible for establishing a precedent which would affect the whole denomination, and not only has time increased our own assurance that we did right, but has brought even some of the gentlemen who at the time urged it, to our opinion. It must be seen, that if an act of Church discipline exercised upon such men, and voted for by such a majority, was to be a matter for arbitration, nothing could be regarded as decided by the Church and exempt from an effort to bring it to a like tribunal. Now, whether arbitration be encouraged or not, our self-government must be held to, and no opportunity to urge its final and decisive character ought to be lost. Our yielding to it could have done nothing so much as have furnished a precedent for factious men to fall back on, whenever placed in a minority. The fact would have become known, and wherever known would have played into the hands of strong-willed and discontented

cliques. Arbitration and Independency are not incompatible, but, on the one hand, arbitration amongst us is altogether dependent upon honour, for there is no other power to enforce it, and, on the other hand, Independency must be exceedingly jealous of arbitration or it will lose all its distinctive strength. We not only knew that we had men of doubtful honour to deal with, but we saw that we could only allow arbitration by surrendering great principles. For this loss there would have been no compensation. True, the expelled members clamoured, shouted, made all the noise they possibly could, but is the reward of such behaviour to be special consideration? Is Independency to give another opportunity to men for the gaining of their ends, who have already given the best proof that they care more for these than aught beside? He whose manhood is of the highest sort will refuse the option of remaining where he is not wanted, will suffer for the Master anything rather than bring dishonour upon His name. Nothing so much disqualifies men for arbitration, and calls upon the Church to be so firm, as a display of conduct such as we witnessed. It may be said that arbitration in such cases would stop the mouths of such, and also be for the satisfaction of neighbouring Churches. My belief is that the mouths of such men would never be stopped unless arbitration was in their favour; and there are other methods by which the neighbouring Churches in such cases can be satisfied. In the first place large majorities may be delusive, but

large majorities in an Independent Church, which it is assumed are composed of men and women who are bound in fellowship because they love their crucified and risen Master, ought to be laid great stress upon; and woe to Independency when it can be so no longer! And then again, on the one hand, the general behaviour of the Church, and, on the other, of those who oppose it, will speak more loudly than anything else by any possibility can do.

What then are the cases for arbitration? When the minority is almost equal in numerical strength to the majority, there may be a case. But even here, where there is an almost equally divided Church, is there nothing better than arbitration? If Independency is to work well, the feeling must be created that the majority rules. This ought to be insisted upon till it permeates every Church, and, when it does, more than half our discussions and heart-burnings will be at an end. It is not honourable to continue in an Independent Church, only accepting the decision of the majority when it accords with preconceived opinions and predetermined plans; and this must be made matter of conscience. If a large majority, for instance, decides that a certain ministerial candidate be invited to the pastorate, the minority is bound either to withdraw, or, what is far better, seek to be in harmony with the general current and wishes of the Church. For the few under such circumstances to form a party, the object of which shall be to oppose the pastor and

the Church on every available occasion, just because the minister is not the one upon whom they had fixed, or whom above all others they desired, is to act in antagonism, not only to the spirit of Independency, but of Christianity itself. And so with all other measures and movements decided on by the Church. If self-government is an essential characteristic of Independency, the controlling power of a majority ought to be none the less so. Nothing needs so much insisting on, for in very few of our churches is it recognised. Let a man hold his opinions still, if he will, but let him feel that if he remains in the Church he is to forget his own likes in seeking the peace and prosperity of the community to which he belongs. But let it be as loudly and distinctly declared that majorities are not to be tyrants. Where the minority is large, unless the question is regarded as vital, the majority ought to act with consideration, and make the hour of its power a time of reconciliation.

When the minister thinks that he is badly treated by the bulk of his people, there may be a case for arbitration; but again, there is a better method still; it is bringing ministers to feel that when the large proportion of the people desire a change, it is neither wise, manly, nor just to remain. How can a minister, whilst the mass of the people are giving him clear evidence from time to time that he is not wanted, do any large amount of good, or even conduct himself with the dignity which belongs to a true man? It is certain that a

board of arbitration would always, and very properly, in such a case, advise a change. But our ministers do not very often need such hints, and when they do, the object can be gained apart from arbitration.

There may be a case for arbitration when the law courts are appealed to. Not when law is threatened, but when it is meant. The two things are very different. We were threatened, and the threat was re-iterated, but we knew so well the tactics which the men we had to do with could use, and also that our action was not less legal in the eye of the civil law than in the sight of the Head of the Church, that we never gave it a moment's credence. But the first steps are occasionally taken, not to terrify, but to try the case, and if possible this ought to be arrested.

Arbitration might also be employed in villages where two or three churches are fighting against each other year after year in all the bitterness of the strife which severed them into hostile camps. Often for nothing save their jealousies are these churches remarkable, unless it be for the £80 or £100 which they give to their ministers! There ought to be one strong, united Church, blessed and blessing, and whatever brings this about will be a real good. These remarks do not apply to small churches in large towns, for in the great centres of our population, Independency may have too many small congregations, but she has not, and cannot have too many Churches; what is needed, is not the closing of their doors, but power in the pulpit, or in

the Church, or both. And if a board of reference, or advice, or arbitration, succeed in bringing about the union of some of our village Churches, it is only by a full acknowledgment and practice of the principles which I have suggested, that such divisions can be *prevented*. What we need is not so much a supplement to our Independency, as the proper working of it, for it is not Independency that causes disruptions, but the lack of it. Neither am I at all sure that anything like an external judicial board would be the *best* method to bring about a desirable union of Churches. It is certainly not the only method, for I have known Churches in such circumstances settle their own differences, and this, amongst other things, saves arbitration from being degraded by either party practically ignoring a decision which there is no power to enforce. If external influence confines itself to the earnest efforts of influential and unofficial neighbours, all will probably be done that can be done, and be done much better than it otherwise could be.

Cases of discipline are assuredly not cases for arbitration. For who is so likely to know the man as his fellow members? No doubt, the Church will make mistakes, but so would a board of arbitration, and far oftener. If men be pronounced guilty by those who know them well, and have had opportunity of watching them closely, there are certainly strong enough probabilities against them to warrant the act.

Where two parties exist in a Church, each to the

annoyance of the other, I do not look for much good from arbitration. If the arbitrators could permeate the bad leaven with the spirit which beareth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things, they would accomplish a great and hallowed object, and enough to justify its adoption. But I look for no such result. Men who can remain in a Church for its disturbance and disaster, are not likely to be conciliated and endowed with greater spiritual purity and love by a board of arbitrators. If the efforts which are certain to be made by some of the better and nobler spirits of the Church fail, any external effort would not be very likely to produce lasting fruit. What such a church needs is what most of our Churches need, an adoption of the views of Independency to which I have adverted, and greater devotion to the common Master.

In complex disputes, and where matters have gone so far that a verdict must be taken, the Church in most cases is more likely to be just than what is termed a board of "impartial men." For there is much, and often very weighty evidence, which cannot be put in very tangible form, but which is already possessed by those who have been spectators of what was going on. The Teazers and the Rowdysons cannot go on year after year successfully masking their unholy tactics, in the presence of an observant Church, but they can say and do a thousand things calculated to wound the minister's heart and rob the people of harmony without laying themselves open to other than general charges.

They can goad on a minister till he makes a mistake, or they trip him up, or put him in a dilemma, and then ask for an arbitration when they can easily enough prove the point, and with still greater ease disown that they had ever been other than his truest friends. Whatever has torn his heart they will declare to have been imagination, and whatever coldness has existed they will vow has been on his part. The error into which he has at last fallen will be cited as a sample, when the marvel is that he has not been snared night and day. It will be useless to examine words they have used, for quite another interpretation will be put on them, and to all general charges they will give a solemn and general disclaimer. If this assumes that they are wanting in honour, let me ask if there are not such men? The men who make arbitration a necessity are usually such, therefore the proper tribunal is the Church, where they are known and where they cannot live for years undetected. Again, it will always be difficult to get witnesses to declare all that may be necessary before an arbitration board, especially if important persons are concerned in the dispute. They know that they will thereby become marked men, and that whether their witness be given in public or private, they will be exposed to annoyance, and it is not always that men have courage enough for that. They would give their vote, and it would have its weight, but appearing in a private court is what many would dread, and not a few absolutely refuse. Nor would the decision

be always respected. "Suppose," said a gentleman to Mr. Madden, when he and his friends took up the idea of arbitration, "that the arbitration establishes Mr. Wilkinson?" "Oh, but that won't do," he exclaimed, "he must go." Arbitration with such men is solemn mockery!

And that reminds me how seldom arbitration would act either in the interest of the Church or pastor. Usually the recommendation would no doubt be for the minister to go, assuming that he would thereby gain in comfort, and that there would be an end of all dispute, whereas in most cases it would merely be its suspension, and thus the minister would be sacrificed in vain. That there are occasions when it would be for the good of ministers, I freely own. Such a case was mine, and so strongly did I feel this, that at one stage I urged it with influential members, and even went so far as to bring about an interview with them and one of the leading ministers who suggested it, but when I saw that my gain would be the sacrifice of a great principle, and further saw the movements, on the one hand, of Messrs. Littleton and Dandyson, of whom the reader will hear more, and, on the other hand, of the expelled, I not only drew back, but would have suffered anything rather than have acquiesced in it, and ever since the conviction has gained upon me that the Church acted wisely, not only saving itself from mere scheming, but the denomination from a dangerous precedent.

But in all cases the disputants ought, if possible, to be influenced to submit their case and to seek arbitration. If the offer comes from without, it is almost certain at such a sensitive time to be regarded as meddlesome. If the men who take interest enough in the matter to send a document offering arbitration, would instead see principal persons on both sides, and without hearing any one sided version or giving any opinion, urge arbitration, the attempt would only fail if no other method could prove successful.

If it be ever necessary to propose it, let me suggest how it should not be done, and I cannot better illustrate the wrong way than by giving an idea of the document, its origin and history, which was sent to us. The first we heard of it came from the expelled members who knew that it was coming before we received it, and were good enough to let it be freely circulated that we were going to be put right, which was scarcely the best preparation we could have had. Then again, we had reason to believe that an *ex parte* statement had been made, and that some person or persons had acted on it, and in this we were not mistaken. The gentleman who drew up the document has since acknowledged to me that Mr. Rowdyson sent a letter to say that in an hour after its delivery he would call to see him on important business, and on this occasion furnished him with his own account. It was, I allow, very difficult to refuse hearing the story which Mr. Rowdyson volunteered, but, inasmuch as his statement had been heard, ours ought

to have been asked for. For how else was it to be known that there was a case for arbitration? Instead, however, of this, we were not allowed even when we asked to state our case. Perhaps, the best proof that it would have been wise to have made inquiries of us is the fact that some of the gentlemen who signed the document have since owned that ours was not the case they supposed. I attribute no unfair motive to the gentleman in question, for he has since been candid enough to make full explanations and satisfactory acknowledgments, and my esteem for him was never greater than it is to-day. That reminds me that another false method of proceeding is assuming any point which may be a point in question. The letter which we received took for granted that our action must be prejudicial to our healthy development as a spiritual communion. But this was the very essence of the case. We believed that what he had done *was* above all things *essential* to our spiritual growth, and time has proved that we were *quite right.* And then care should be taken that such names be appended to the document as will be held in great respect, and will be regarded with much favour and confidence, for the names are its chief recommendations and arguments. Two of those with which the offer of arbitration we received was accompanied, were almost enough to insult us, for we read the signatures of Edward Littleton, Esq., and the Rev. Mr. Dandyson of Boredom. The latter gentleman must be introduced as an official, and it is only fair to

say that in this character he is, probably, as unequalled in the brotherhood of red tape as he clearly considers himself to be. Few men also illustrate so fully the power of the cheek and the elbow. Had I only seen him in the presence of those who are set as suns in the lay and clerical system, I might have been in danger of supposing that he rejoiced in being a satellite, but I soon discovered that this was only a habit of practical joking on his part, and that when their faces were no longer full in view he could explain away their right to shine at all, and prove that he was the central orb to which they were only fit to bow in lowly obeisance. Also, I soon discovered that the degree in which he was willing to become all things to great men was the degree in which he could play the tyrant over those whom providence had marked out as objects for helpfulness and sympathy. Few men have had better opportunities of obtaining respect and admiration, but I know him to exist, both as a man and a secretary, on mere toleration, save to a very few. Indeed, one of the gentlemen who signed the document along with him made to me this confession, "he is not fit to touch your case with the tongs." And then I knew that Mr. Teazer, who very well knew his man, and how easy it would be to use him on such an occasion, had waited on him at the outset, and that full of gratitude for having had the case laid before him, and intoxicated with the hope of realizing such a dream as becoming a judge among his brethren, Mr. Dandyson immediately pledged

himself to Mr. Teazer's cause, who in turn was so overjoyed as to divulge the fact to his brethren in tribulation, and hence the report that we were "to be put right." By this time Edward Littleton had also acquired official distinction: no doubt, in consequence of the diligence and ability with which he continued to occupy the time at the district meeting, and because he was a barrister whose genius was unrecognised and likely to remain so by an unappreciative country, and so would have time and opportunity to magnify an office upon which it was well known his heart was fondly set. I could have made allowance for all this, but I knew that the shattered health with which his own late minister had been obliged to retire from his position, and which I felt all the more keenly because he had been a fellow-student, was due in no small degree to slights and insults of which he was the author; and since then I had seen him act with an overbearing cruelty to others, which is as certain to dig the grave of his own official career as it is obnoxious. We were not obliged to take these two candidates for denominational honours as our arbiters, it is true, and it must at the same time be owned that they were accompanied by other names, several of which suggested and guaranteed every qualification to sit at a board of arbitration, but such a document should have had upon it no objectionable name whatever.

In all cases of arbitration then, if the above evil is to

be avoided, the board must be elected by the party seeking it. A standing council, either for advice or arbitration, can only be an unmixed evil in other respects also. Nothing could better suit the Teazers and the Rowdysons, for they would have nothing to lose by taking case after case to an arbitration board, but is it likely that a minister would be dragged time after time before such a tribunal? He would sacrifice his position sooner than his reputation, and this would exactly suit their purpose. And we can scarcely doubt that the board would gradually fall into the hands of the men least desirable for the purpose. Nothing could keep absent the Littletons and the Dandysons. If they were in the flesh and there was a case, they would be present under any circumstances. For what could be more to the heart's content of Mr. Dandyson than putting his brethren right, or of Mr. Littleton than laying down the law? Imagine sensitive and able men having their sayings and doings investigated by such officials. Thousands would sooner abandon all they had to struggle for, unless it were righteousness, than let such men play the judge on their hearts and lives.

It ought also to be understood that the respective disputants shall elect arbiters subject to the general approval. It is quite possible to secure men to whom neither side can take exception, but, on the contrary, in whom both can have confidence. It would require two or three more consultations by the representatives

of each, but would it not be much better than each choosing friends? In the latter case the result could only be greater dissatisfaction and heart burning.

The greater the distance from which the arbiters and referees come, the better. A dispute in a Church is never very long local. But if it rapidly spreads in the immediate district, it rarely becomes of denominational fame, or even circulates beyond the county. Where the fact does get known, it is very rarely unaccompanied with grave perversions or partisan statements. Sometimes interested persons, as I know well, take such care to make known their own version, and reiterate it with such assurance, that it is almost impossible not to be influenced by them. Is this not a strong argument for calling in arbiters from a distance? First impressions are often strong. Even when men are not consciously influenced, they often are unconsciously. A juryman may therefore know too much, but he cannot know too little of the case he comes to hear and pronounce a verdict on. And hence arbitrators can scarcely come from too great a distance. There is another reason for this, namely, the possible local influence or position of some one or more of the parties who seek judgment on their case. Not only would the general reputation of men be a consideration, which may be legitimate enough sometimes, but there is danger of other things, such as liberality and status having weight. And we know that a man's reputation away from home may be altogether false. The county

may regard him as the pillar of the Church to which he belongs, when he is nothing so much as its plague; and, whilst those who see him on rare occasions may conclude that he is the incarnation of most of the virtues and graces, those who know him best and have to do with his inner life may know that he is nothing so much as a hollow sham very thickly veneered.

But we are not to assume that our Churches are in a condition to justify the loud cry that is being raised in certain quarters for arbitration, or some external and controlling force. Langton is suggestive enough of faction I own, for in the last six years there is not a Nonconformist Church which has not been in an unquiet condition; even the Presbyterians, though only of recent origin amongst us have not escaped; and certainly all the Churches of the Establishment have not. Without examining the causes in the Episcopal Churches where it has prevailed, I may say at once, that the root-cause of its prevalence and repetition in the Nonconformist Churches amongst us is successful faction, which emboldened by its successes has not only been encouraged to persevere, but has necessarily created and propagated its own spirit. What was needed, therefore, at Langton, was a check to this unholy force, and we gave it quite as much for this end as for our own comfort. If what we have done had been done years ago, Langton Nonconformity would have been a stronger thing to-day, but just because the evil has been allowed to reign so long, and has had so

much sacrificed at its shrine to appease it, Langton must not be taken as a fair illustration of the working of the Free Churches. In their order, in the healthy play of their functions, and in their harmony, I believe that our Churches, when worked upon the principles they profess, are inferior to none.

Then let me again repeat, that our greatest want is better and truer Independency. When our Churches have disgraced themselves, either by miserable faction fights, or by a slavish and unholy peace, it is because Independency has been sold, or because it has been trampled on. We can never anticipate having a history free from all imperfection, but hitherto the evils with which it has been associated, and the sad and often heartrending stories bound up with it, have not been half so much because of our Independency as because of our cowardice in asserting it, and our willingness in betraying it. Theoretically, we believe in the sovereignty of the people, but how often the arbiter of the Church is a solitary man, or a clique of men! Ministers are not a little to blame, for they have sanctioned it by allowing themselves so frequently to be dismissed in spite of the will and affection of the Church, and simply for the greater ease and comfort which they have not found. If this were Independency, I would say, let it go, for what bondage either for Church or pastor could be so great? State control is neither so oppressive nor so injurious as the supreme control of one man with a large purse and little

soul, or the still greater tyranny of a faction whose only claim to rule is arrogance. When the people are swayed by the "one Lord," and pervaded by the "one faith," they rarely err, and this rule of Christ in the hearts of the people is what we need. Till this millennial reign of the Church is established, let us accept whatever will help it, but let us be equally jealous of all external officialism, whether it incarnate itself in journals, boards, or councils, for without doubt there is a danger of its simply becoming additional tyranny, as well as of reducing us far below the level of Presbyterianism and Wesleyanism, and leaving Episcopacy with its educated Bishops and judicial bench, a home of comparative freedom; since all these do thoroughly, effectually, and authoritatively what we could only feebly imitate, unless we altogether abandoned whatever is distinctive in our congregationalism. If we will but work the principles we hold, and teach and preach the fact that the Church is the court of our appeal, and that she, for all her decisions, is responsible to her unseen but ever present and observant Lord, we shall soon end the history of our strifes and feebleness, for the men who must now be Popes, and the factions which fatten on our misery, will either go to their own places, or learn to be the servants of the Church for Jesus' sake. If Independency is to flourish, she must be true to herself, and when she is, she will better represent the Kingdom of God, and take a higher place among the Churches of the land than she has ever done.

CHAPTER XV.

A PAMPHLET.

I HAD been threatened by letter, that, if I dared to preside at the meeting when the resolution of discipline was to be proposed, no opportunity should be lost of damaging my reputation; I knew that the men were equal to the threat, but I felt that I could well afford to let them do their worst.

A few weeks after the enforcement of the discipline, the air became filled with rumours of a pamphlet; it was also boasted that Mr. Wilkinson was therein to get a "stinger," was to be "taught a lesson," was "to be crushed" and much beside.

In due time the press brought forth the long promised production. With becoming and characteristic modesty it was addressed "To the Congregational Churches of England," and in much self-denial the opening greeting of the chairman of the Union to the "Brethren and fathers" was omitted. It was declared by the authors to be a master-piece, and therefore there was extraordinary restraint in withholding it from the reviewers, but that the public might not lose the treat,

they raised among themselves £26 for all the necessary expenses of a gratuitous circulation. Very appropriately it appeared under the auspices of Mr. Rowdyson's son-in-law, and the gentleman to whom I have referred as having shewn so much devotion to the cause of the expelled members, and who deserves all the more credit, inasmuch as for six years he had never lifted a hand in the work of the Church, or shewn his presence at a Church meeting. The plan of the work was agreed upon in solemn conclave. The body of it was to be a joint production, and letters written by the gentlemen who had become distasteful to the Church, together with others from the pens of Messrs. Cockle and Moonshine, the former of whom had been called to order by the Church, whilst the latter had had passed upon him a direct vote of censure, were to be *addenda*. This arrangement was excellent, giving as it did all aspirants for fame an opportunity to gain laurels in an untrodden field. Cynics will doubtless smile at the combined effort, but if it were generally known that, with one exception, none of these gentlemen had enjoyed any educational advantages, that not more than two of them had ever condescended to read a book since boyhood, and that therefore they submitted their efforts to supervision and correction, they would obtain the fame which they deserve. If the letters had appeared in their primitive state, the public might have had a work as great in its etymology as "Artemus Ward," or one of "Mrs. Brown's," but even in its

present condition it is an immortal production and well deserving of careful perusal.

I can now afford to think of this pamphlet quite playfully, but that the authors had their reward let me acknowledge, for it made as much havoc of my health and peace as its most sanguine projectors could have anticipated. They neither miscalculated what I should feel, nor the best method and manner of striking the blow. For days and weeks they put me to as much torture as famine, nakedness, and the sword all combined could have done. They never knew this, for although I have never attained to the stoicism of Zeno, nor to the wonderful self-control and indifference of the North American Indian when cut by the knife and scorched by the fire of his enemies, I have often been hypocrite enough to affect both.

That the object was purely malignant, I am sorry to say that after time for careful reflection I cannot doubt. Had it been for their own vindication it would have been legitimate enough, but seeing that we had never published their names in connection with Church discipline, and that not even the most ambitious of them could hope to be known much farther than their own town, this could not be their motive.

The attack upon the Church is slight, for although to my knowledge truth generally is by no means adhered to, and that respecting several gentlemen positive falsehoods are told, it is clear that the only object in misrepresenting facts and maligning my friends, is to

strike the more effectually at me. The reason is obvious: it was to be circulated where I was known, but where my friends could not be, and therefore where they could not be injured, but where there was the hope that I might. There was this in favour of the talented and amiable authors, that in hundreds of places I am known only by name, and that name ought to be associated with all that is honourable, whilst they are not known at all, and therefore might assume that they would pass for respectable men.

As assailants they had me at a great disadvantage; indeed, I am only doing them justice in saying that otherwise they would never have invoked literary aid. If they had succeeded in eliciting a reply, there would have been another opportunity to throw dirt. They would as a consequence have prolonged the strife, and by this means some members of the congregation might have become wearied, for what man worthy of the name does not feel prolonged strife to be a terrible evil? And to have weakened the Church and congregation would have been a triumph more than congenial to these ex-members. It is very awful to impute such a motive, but unfortunately no one doubted it.

Their expectations of being answered must have been very great indeed, for no one knew better than they did, not only that very much of what they wrote was absolutely false, but that the materials for proving it so were in my possession. I knew only too well, however, the men with whom I had to deal. Not

being fettered by any conscientious scruples, as they had amply demonstrated, they were able to make their rejoinder whatever they desired, which is a decided gain. If they were afraid of saying all they wished, or had nothing at all particular to say, they had already proved how great and brave they were at insinuation. And then they had the immense advantage of the people concerning whom the shrewd Lydian addressing Crœsus said, "If thou conquerest them, thou canst get nothing from them, for they have nothing to lose."

My deacons deeming it probable, I suppose, that I might think it necessary to give a reply, addressed to me the following letter:—

"*Langton.*

"DEAR PASTOR,—We take the liberty of addressing this letter to you, believing that you will have seen and perused the pamphlet called, "A statement of facts," circulated by, or on behalf of, the relieved members, and as we can plainly see that the *animus* contained in such pamphlet is chiefly aimed at you, we have thought it probable that you might, in justification of yourself, feel inclined to reply to it in some form. But seeing that it contains so much misrepresentation and suppression of the truth, and knowing that you have in your possession Church minutes, letters, and retractions from various parties connected with this pamphlet, which would invalidate its statements, and as we all know that the conduct of the parties who are connected with it has brought down

upon themselves the discipline of the Church, whilst you have had so many manifestations of approval and confidence,* we think that you can well afford to observe the most dignified course and remain silent. We incidentally have had many opportunities of speaking to, and getting the opinions of members of the committee, as well as members of the Church and congregation who took so deep an interest in soliciting you to remain with us as our pastor, all of whom are strongly opposed to any reply being made by any one of us.

"We also think, that were it noticed in any way, it would only tend to dignify it; and the whole pamphlet is of such a character as will condemn itself in the minds of thoughtful and devout men.

"For all the above reasons, as well as for the truest interest of the Church and denomination, we, with all respect, do earnestly beg of you to take no further notice of it.

"Hoping that you will be long spared to labour amongst us as our pastor, and praying for the Divine blessing to rest upon all your efforts in the cause of Christ,

"We are, dear pastor, yours sincerely,

"W. PENSER,
J. ALDER,
J. PASSMORE,
D. McGAVIN,
} Deacons of the Church."

* The Church had just presented handsome testimonials, between six and seven hundred persons being present, and ministers representing all the Nonconformist denominations.

Fortunately, the necessity was not laid upon me, to make any reply, for without a single exception, all the gentlemen whom I consulted assured me that it was not worthy of notice. The following is a fair sample of the letters I received. Many others denounced the publication more strongly, but I give it because it is from one of the manliest men in the denomination, and happily one of the foremost, and especially because he had suggested arbitration.

"My Dear Wilkinson,

. . . . . There is no occasion. The *animus* is evident, and can do you no harm.

"Yours sincerely,

_____"

And not only did very many of my ministerial brethren offer me the assurance that they read in it nothing so much as a vindication of our action, but I even received communications from gentlemen upon whose generous sympathy I had no claim whatever. Here, for instance, is one out of many:—

"My Dear Sir,—I am an entire stranger to you; but I have this day received a copy of the "Statement," printed by the "Six" of the former members of your Church; I have read it; and I write to express my sympathy with you in your terrible struggle for liberty.

"I am grieved to find that some of your predecessors have allowed their names to be used, as they have

done; but I am not surprised, as I have long known two of them.

"And I am glad that your friends declined the services of those gentlemen, who offered to interfere in the case, as I have long know some of them also. . . .

"Pardon an entire stranger, who sympathises with you, and hopes that now you have peace and prosperity.

"I have the honour to be, my dear Sir,

"Yours very truly,

_____"

The manner in which my ministerial brethren in the town acted was quite as gratifying as such letters were. With the single exception of one of my own denomination, who gave unmistakeable signs of having a lively remembrance of pews to let, there was not another who did not offer me either private or public sympathy, and in most cases both were tendered.

This chapter, then, is written as a warning to men who imagine that they can indulge in a spirit of hate, and disguise it by the use of virtuous and high-sounding phraseology. Of all the passions there is none so base as malice, and of all the hypocrisies none is so mean as that which aims blows at reputation under the pretence of serving the cause of truth, and never are lying and dishonesty so cowardly as when used for such a purpose. Such men deserve exposing to the utmost, but, perhaps, no one can expose them half so much as they do themselves. For a base spirit must reveal itself. Nothing

can hide it. When it uses all the arts of simulation, it deceives no one so much as itself. It thus becomes its own answer and suffers permanently only in its own reputation. Time is as much its crushing enemy as it is the friend and advocate of the righteous.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MODEL CHURCH.

WHERE to worship was a consideration which weighed upon the minds of the expelled members, causing them no little perplexity. It was at last made quite clear that they could not worship with us. If they had not been blinded by a false purpose, they would have seen this when they could no longer be devout worshipers; but until the Church exercised discipline, they had imagined that their work was to educate the congregation to the same position which they occupied themselves, namely, to break the command for keeping holy the Sabbath, to nurse wrath against the minister during the hour of ministration, and to do all in their power to necessitate his retirement. Having failed so completely, and having circulated "the Pamphlet," they were bound at last to retreat themselves. But whither? For many reasons we were quite sure that they would seek continued identification with the visible Church: one was, that if we imagined their spirit to be alien from Christ's, they altogether differed from us. My conviction was, and is, that they regarded themselves, not only as Christians, but as superlative Christians. Ever since I had known them, they had

been in that happy state where assurance is doubly sure. This was the common characteristic of them all. I always regarded their attendance at chapel, save for example's sake, as quite superfluous. If the services had been entertainments for the public good and they the patrons, they would have been precisely in their places, but they were scarcely prepared to be lowly suppliants, or to assume that the exhortations of the Word were for them. What might be the nature of their praying in secret I cannot say, but the burden of their petitions at the prayer-meetings was the "Heathen," the "Gospel-hardened," and the "Publicans and Sinners," "rolling sweet morsels on their tongues," and "stumbling among the dark mountains." You could never have gathered from their prayers that they were other than highly respectable mortals, too little appreciated by the public, and very much persecuted by Providence. This Pharisaism was their curse. It was in harmony with it and no doubt the result of it, that above all things they were official Christians, whose chief duty it was to keep the minister humble, to be prominent in efforts for "the salvation of souls," and to be regarded by their townsmen as the "chief men" of the Chapel.

Most of these characteristies made their present position somewhat trying. For a few Sabbaths most of them attended Church, but there was no chance in the world of being churchwardens, and so they fell off. The Wesleyans knew them too well, and had shown

much sympathy with the action of the Church towards them. One of them had been a Baptist, but had been compelled to leave that denomination under circumstances which put both the deacons and minister of the chapel in opposition to him, and in the words of one of them, "proved him beneath our contempt." Shaw Street Chapel had just completed the process of driving its minister away after a pastorate of nine months, and was yet in that turmoil to which Langton Nonconformity had become only too awfully accustomed. Tadcaster Street Chapel had the drawback of being the monument of the last rupture, and of having cost its promoters nearly £7,000. True, the original minister of the place had gone, since then another had come and gone, and now there was a third; some of the original members were no longer identified with it; but some few were left, and unfortunately they had such a distinct remembrance of what had transpired, that they did not hesitate to whisper, and pretty loudly too, that they might come, but that they should never be in office, if they could be kept out.

And so we gave credit to the rumour that there was to be a new Church without a chapel; that is to say, they intended to worship together with their relatives, their friends, and all other persons who by reason of any crotchet or peculiarity might be assailed and drawn into the cause. The rumour became a fact, and the expelled members became "fishers of men," with a zeal quite worthy the Apostles. Many baits were thrown

out, but that which was oftenest used was the promise that the new Church should not cost any more than the old one, and that there need be no fear of any call for a building, as there was a firm resolve not to build. The latter decision was as necessary for the fishers as for the fish, for, seeing they had been accustomed to much position for little money, it was scarcely to be expected that they would pay much money for little position.

The newspapers were furnished by them with a notice of their final preliminary meeting, and it stated "that several of the speakers pointed out that they had declined to unite with any other congregations lest there should be the same evils against which they were struggling!" What the said evils were, reader, the author of this paper cannot enumerate, never having heard them, and being under the impression that the promoters of the new Church had been expelled as troublers, after having had accorded to them a patience and forbearance very rare, but this was no doubt a virtuous and model way of putting it. It was also announced that the object of the present movement was to illustrate "the principles of Independency!" That this noble object might be secured, a series of rules were printed and published, chiefly to the end that they should never again be expelled, and that if ever there should be another minister, he should never be "over them in the Lord," but *under them* in all respects. For instance, it was resolved that no minister

should remain more than three years unless re-elected, and it will not require a very shrewd minister to see to what this dooms him. If he is not specially tractable he will know what to expect, and may spend a good portion of his pastorate in looking out for another, that his wife and children may not be homeless. The question of a Liturgy was mooted and threatened to become a very obstinate one, till Mr. Cockle declared that if it were not introduced he would leave them, and seeing that they were set for the illustration of Independency, and that Mr. Cockle was likely to be a man of his word, having twice left the Methodists, thrice the Independents, once the Episcopalians, and now was making such a declaration in the new Church as was proof that his aptitude to act upon his convictions was in no way unimpaired by his many trials and vicissitudes, it was decided that there should be a Liturgy. For more than a month it was used morning and evening, but after that time in the morning only, and at present enjoys a very precarious existence indeed, but this is certainly not the fault of the Liturgy, for without exception it is the best before the Free Churches.

I have spoken of this movement as a new Church, but the Church was yet to be formed. Invitations were sent out in abundance asking gentlemen to preside at its formation, and in abundance were politely declined. At last, to invite Mr. Dandyson became inevitable. But even he hesitated, for he wrote to me a letter,

which for its brotherliness surprised me, asking if the Church and I concurred in the step. My reply was appreciative, but I was obliged to tell him that we could scarcely concur in a movement which was inaugurated by an undisguised attempt to vilify us all. But so resistless proved the temptation to sit in the presidential chair, and be a large man on a small occasion, that in less than twenty-four hours he had accepted the invitation!

The election of officers was the culmination of many hopes. Long, if not patient waiting, was amply rewarded. The reader anticipates me, for among the "Ruling Elders" were Messrs. Teazer and Moonshine, and among the deacons Messrs. Badfield and Madden. Mr. Rowdyson was elevated to the unique position of president of the Church. If the reader asks, why? The author replies, that the Church was intended to illustrate Independency, and how could that be done without a "President of the Church?" If it is asked why Mr. Rowdyson was thus exalted and not Mr. Teazer, the author replies that two answers have been given; one being, that Mr. Rowdyson having at that time no occupation, and being peculiarly gifted, was eminently qualified to enlighten many who had not yet left us as to the reasons why they should do so; the other, that as he was about to leave the town and shake off the dust of his feet upon it, this was intended to convince him that Providence called him with a loud voice to remain.

Not many days after the formation of the new Church, I received a document which stated that the seventy-eight persons whose names were attached to it wished to be removed from our Church books. The reader will scarcely be prepared for such a number, but it was characteristic of the gentlemen whom we expelled, and whose names we had only been too glad to cross off our books immediately, that they tendered their own resignations! In addition to this extraordinary and original method of dealing with themselves, they sent in the resignation of several persons who were not members, and others who had ceased to be for months. Then they had four-and-twenty relatives, and although it was confidently asserted that some of these had voted for their expulsion, it is scarcely surprising that they were at last induced to go with them. It was in their favour also, that they were not burdened with that costly luxury, pride, which compelled us to leave persons to judge for themselves, and made us even above seeking to persuade those whom persuasion could influence, but whom they were willing, by virtue of what nature and grace had made them, to bring entreaty to bear upon night and day. Some very ugly rumours were afloat about the kind of arguments occasionally employed. I had an opportunity of testing one case, and used it. The names of an old man and woman were sent in amongst the rest, neither of whom had yet been absent from the chapel, and therefore who had never given any practical sympathy

with the movement. Moreover, they had said that they had not signed the petitions, and so had given us no reason to believe that they regarded the expelled members with the slightest favour. Last, but not least, they were very poor, indeed, dependent upon help, which the Church had regularly supplied. I made up my mind that for the sake of satisfaction I would call upon them and upon no others. When the old woman showed some hesitation, I assured her that she need not demur, as all I wished to know was, whether their names had been put down with their own consent. She then told me that Mr. Rowdyson had called to persuade them, and that they had declined, but that upon being again urged they ultimately consented. What, it may be said was to be gained by persons who were in need of help? Numbers—and in this case the addition could be no severe burden, as they would be the only persons in the new Church to take the sacramental money. Finally, the offer of arbitration, although I believe that nothing was further from the intention of the bulk of the gentlemen who proposed it, operated in their favour, both by giving them a certain prestige and enabling them to continue the tumult; and under similar circumstances it will always have the latter result.

Out of a community which now numbered 338 members, we considered that the number with which we parted was, on the whole, small. They had managed in various ways to keep the Church agitated for months,

and if the reader wishes to augment faction, let him go and do likewise. With such an alliance as twenty-four relatives supplied, they ought to have doubled their number, and if they had not been men who deserved expulsion, they would most certainly have done it.

If self-laudation could prove it they were the backbone of the congregation. What is certain is, that they have never been missed, either in work or liberality. In the bulk of our appeals for money we have found ourselves richer without than with them, whilst not a single working department suffered for a Sabbath. It would have been strange had it not been so, for despite all efforts they left all the wealth of the congregation and all its earnestness behind. My conviction is that the men who are the nuisance of other Churches would be just as much missed.

And it must not be imagined that they now had seventy-eight members in their fellowship. Not only had several whose names they gave us left the town, but many others never joined them at the Lord's table. It was said that Mr. Teazer's son and one of the chief witnesses brought forward to criminate Thomas Alder could not do so, as the attention they had drawn to themselves, in consequence of Mr. Teazer's action, was rather more than they could bear. If Mr. Alder had desired revenge he might have had it, not only in the above-mentioned circumstance taken in connection with the fact that his own son's reputation had

obtained for itself increased and increasing confidence and respect, but also because the losses with which he was threatened were averted, and that ever since his commercial prospects had been stronger and brighter, whilst another gentleman had begun to feel the pressure of commercial anxiety. But he was too magnanimous and too much of a man to find aught but reason for sorrow in these things.

The tea-meeting which is now an inevitable appendage of Episcopal, as well as Nonconformist movements, was quite a brilliant affair, and in all respects worthy the men. Mr. Rowdyson, who occupied the chair in his official capacity as president, averred that the Israelites had not been more distinctly led by the cloud and pillar of fire than he and his friends had been to their present position. Whether the cloud and pillar were the act of discipline and the refusal on our part to submit to arbitration, he did not state, nor did he recall the battles which they had fought against the Providence which led them. He was scarcely so vague in dealing with ministers, for although he owned that he did not altogether agree with the friend whom he quoted, and who had hinted that the millennium would be nearer when ministers preached for love, and not for lucre, yet he plainly held up his own unpaid work of faith and labour of love as president of the new Church, as a model to which the ministerial brethren would do well to "take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." Mr. Badfield, whose

behaviour at chapel was so distinctly in the remembrance of us all, spoke eloquently on the high and hallowed emotions excited by worship, and concluded by bidding his hearers look at the bright star of their destiny which was somewhere—he did not point out exactly where—behind the cloud that overshadowed them. It was a great occasion for Mr. Madden; after nearly twenty years of striving, first amongst the Baptists, and for years past amongst the Independents, he at last addressed a public meeting as a deacon; no doubt, he was rightly reported as speaking with much feeling, and expressing strong regrets that they had not taken the present step eighteen months ago. No report was given of Mr. Moonshine's effort, but as he was always strong in the language of "brotherliness," was invariably "conscientious," never did or refused to do anything except on "principle," and at the close of a speech always left his hearers bewildered by statements which it was assumed that they only wanted the power of understanding to appreciate, he, no doubt, spoke with his accustomed ability. Messrs. Teazer and Cockle, for some reason or other, were sleeping partners on the occasion.

The enterprise was now fully launched, but it by no means prospered according to expectation. There was no little disappointment at the gradual decrease of the congregations, which, notwithstanding the notice they sent to the papers, declaring that already the audiences were very large and gave every sign of in-

creasing, grew less and less. This disastrous result is not very mysterious. For the first Sabbaths, if the leaders with their wives and daughters did not go into the highways and hedges to compel men to come in, they certainly went into the congregations of several denominations seeking out their friends, and did all but compel *them* to come in; and if they did not ask the maimed, the halt, and the blind to a cup of tea on a Sunday afternoon, they certainly did any respectable acquaintance who was likely to accompany them afterwards to their place of worship. This kind of thing, of course, was more easily done the first time than the second, and was by no means easy on the third occasion. It was even difficult to retain and keep up the attendance of many who had been led to join the movement; and this, too, was capable of being understood, since so many of them would have been glad to remain where they were, and only left by reason of relationship, obligation, or entreaty. Moreover, the prophets of the new Church proved themselves not altogether true prophets, for the predictions they had uttered concerning the desolation and ruin of the old place, gave less and less hope of fulfilment every day. The supplies, too, were bitterly complained of, and especially was it a sore point, that only on very rare occasions, and from amid a very limited number, could they obtain a ministerial supply, notwithstanding the Dandyson and Littleton interest. Occasionally it was both advisable and necessary to employ native talent; and once there

was the treat of Mr. Teazer's reading prayers, Mr. Cockle preaching, and Mr. Rowdyson presiding at the Lord's Supper and baptising an infant!

Perhaps the most unblushing method which they adopted to glorify themselves, to make our expulsion of them appear quite needless, and to obtain sympathy and patronage, was representing me as having declared that I had great respect for them, and the Church as willing to transfer them to any other Church. The former of these statements rested solely upon my declaration that the object of the discipline was not to injure them! The latter did still greater credit to their ingenuity, inasmuch as the only material they possessed out of which to manufacture such a tribute to themselves, was a gentleman asking in the Church meeting if it would be possible to give them a certificate up to the time of their expulsion; and not only did the suggestion find no response, but, if the certificate had been given, it would have been under advice, and for the simple purpose of taking from them even the foundation for the lawsuit they threatened, and therefore would have contained no acknowledgment of their fitness for Church membership.

The ultimate fate of this Church cannot be told. As far as Congregationalism is concerned, its leaders will probably seek admission to the "County Union," and then consider themselves in that happy state of mind which allows of a triumphant death. That they will get such admission they need not fear, for it is one

of the weaknesses of Independency that almost any band of men, after waiting for a time, performing the orthodox routine, and using the golden key of a subscription list, can obtain the general sanction and recognition. Moreover, this Church has Messrs. Dandyson and Littleton for its patron saints, and under the shelter of such wings any Church ought to be assumed as fit both for this world and the next. That patronage is most assuredly not angelic in its source. But although there may be in it a touch of official retribution in consequence of our not allowing them to put our house in order, our only pain has been to see the tyranny it would exercise if it could, and especially over the weak Churches.

But what is of infinitely greater importance in connection with the Model Church is its moral and spiritual condition, and its hope in this respect is in the led, not in the leaders.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

No thunderstorm ever left behind it a purer atmosphere and a profounder peace than the ejectment of our disturbing elements has done.

For the first time during many years, the people seemed to have grasped the thought that they constitute an Independent Church, and the liberty wherewith they are made free is like to that of a nation in which the reign of faction, intrigue, and conspiracy have been crushed out. At a recent social meeting of the members of the Church, the senior deacon, and almost the oldest member of the Church, said that he could now speak out without restraint, which was what he had not been able to do for ten years! This is a fair illustration of the general feeling, and yet the Church had passed for an Independent Church!

Our resources have been developing weekly. Hitherto it was considered the unpardonable sin by Mr. Teazer, if any one not a *protégé* of his was asked to take any prominent part in work; and when the sin was committed, as it frequently was by me, new workers were regarded so suspiciously and so coldly that they shrank

back as with the feeling that they had been intruders; and hence a large part of the congregation was lost power, both to ourselves and to the Kingdom of our Lord. There are gentlemen in our midst who have been left so long in retirement that it would now be impossible ever to draw out anything like the capacity of helpfulness in them, and the power of good in some of them can scarcely be estimated. But now that Mr. Teazer is not the Head of the Church, and his few sycophants are not the only persons deemed qualified and worthy of the honour of taking a chair, making a speech, filling an office, or lending a helping hand, there is a general interest which has more than once surprised me.

My fear was very great that the treatment of the young man whose character was so malignantly aspersed, and who was thrust into such unenviable notoriety, would deter others from uniting with the Church, and this would have been a sincere grief, for I have always felt that there is something noble and brave in an open and public recognition of the claims of our Lord by young men, as well as been convinced that the Church can only be emancipated from much traditional bondage by such auxiliaries. No doubt we shall for a short time suffer in some degree in this respect, but the manly way in which soon after some young men of the highest social position offered themselves as candidates for Church fellowship, has assured me that it cannot last long.

Our congregations have steadily increased. There is enough to warrant the belief that before long they will be not only healthier, but larger than they have ever been. It is pitiable to see how any new comer is waylaid, besieged, tempted, asked out to tea, and presented with the "Liturgy," by the leaders of the model Church, but compassion is the only feeling that can be awakened, for when men can condescend thus to act they fall lower than their bitterest enemies could wish. There is certainly no fear of our imitating them; indeed, we have been almost needlessly dignified, for it would often have required but a word to regain many whom they took away with them.

Never has there been half such earnestness and such a spirit of goodwill in our schools. For years they were my sorrow; they are now a source of real satisfaction.

I can also call the Sabbath a delight, and because there is no longer the horrible sight of irreverent worshipers, I can proclaim the glad tidings of great joy in something of the spirit of the message.

The days of my first pastorate are revived. I am at one with the people, and they are at one with themselves. I can go in and out amongst them without a misgiving and with much real joy.

I would that all Independent ministers could feel that they were in a like position, but I fear that many an able and devoted man has to drink the cup of bitterness and humiliation at the hand of those who above all others ought to uphold and honour him.

More than one has said to me, "I cannot afford to take the stand you have done." My reply has been, "I would sooner eat bread and water than profess to be the minister of a Church and congregation, whilst, in reality, I was little more than a household servant." For one thing, ministers require that the claims which they cannot make for themselves be urged more thoroughly and fearlessly by an unselfish journalism; and for another, they need a stronger bond of unity, sympathy, and helpfulness among themselves. At Langton I have stood by four ministers when there was scarce another openly to do it, and though in some cases I aroused towards myself considerable displeasure, and even by some friends was considered unwise, I look back upon each occasion with thankfulness and unmingled pleasure. For wisdom, and not expediency, is the fear of the Lord.

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